STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

by

Dan Waters

PROPERTY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

THIS SCRIPT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION, REPRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION WITHOUT THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION. IF LOST OR DESTROYED, PLEASE NOTIFY THE STORY DEPARTMENT.

5/22/95

RETURN TO STORY DEPARTMENT
PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION
5555 Melrose Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90038

©PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

EXT. (VERY) MARS

A black screen irises out into a pristine view of a turbulent ball of orange-red, that is to say, MARS. An impressively modulated SPACE VESSEL chugs across the familiar image of the familiar planet.

EXT. MARS SURFACE

The viewer next rumbles over the blood-reddish rocks and dunes, pausing before a spooky, oddly shaped MINI-MOUNTAIN. This scaled, thirty foot chunk shifts ever so slightly....Then OPENS ITS EYES.

"It" stares far across the Martian landscape to a PACK OF ASTRONAUTS rather haplessly trudging out from a Land Rover.

EXT. WITH THE ASTRONAUTS

The helmeted ensemble is made up of different sexes and Earth nationalities.

SMART-ASS BRITISH ASTRONAUT
Ever have the feelin' you're being...

MACHO AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMANDER
Silence, Carter.
(into helmet)
Houston, day six on-surface. Envoy Team C proceeding north of Canyon Valles Marineris, locking site for Geo-Thermal-Pyroclastic Probe Nineteen. Wagner...

GERMAN FEMALE ASTRONAUT
Winds at 250 miles per hour. Thankfully thin. Temperature today is in the high fifties. Minus fifties, of course.

BRITISH ASTRONAUT CARTER
It's Mars, all right. Daddy, can we go home, now...

ASIAN ASTRONAUT
I'm scanning some very curious rock formations at twenty kilometers...

As the Commander bellows into a he-man rant, the viewer glimpses a mysterious figure coming up behind the explorers.

MACHO AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMANDER
Stay focused, people. Can we all stay focused! We're the first people on this planet and that means we have very specific duties. We are Lack on a Strata-Cross section and about ninety different core samples...If you're hoping to see little green men playing volleyball--wake up, it's not...

ASIAN ASTRONAUT
The rocks are moving, sir!

COMMANDER
What is it with you and the rocks? This is the kind of thing I'm talking about. The rocks are <u>not</u> moving. With all this dust, how can you...

ASIAN ASTRONAUT
The rocks have disappeared, sir.

Astronaut Carter instinctively turns from the pack.

BRITISH ASTRONAUT CARTER
Commander...turn around.

MACHO AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMANDER
Damnit Carter, if this is another...

BRITISH ASTRONAUT CARTER
Now, sir.

Effectively stung by Carter's severe tone, all turn. Standing before the group, in preposterous glory, is a GIDDY NAKED MAN, very human, boyishly barking out strange, screeching sounds. The astronauts can only gape in a dazed tableau.

COMMANDER
Houston, we have a...a man. Caucasian. About six three and a half. Language-- Problematic. Extremely Naked...We await your instruction...

This deadpan comic moment is destroyed by a deafening roar. Erupting out of the sand in a circle around the astronauts are the colossal, Rock-like Martian creatures. They wail along with the naked man.

As the viewer's viewpoint becomes an overhead view of this spectacular madness, a wise voice, belonging to a man the viewer will later know as Jubal Harshaw, rumbles upon the soundtrack.

VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
Our story begins with Giant Rocks screaming Hello.

INT. A MARTIAN CAVE

The pandemonium switches to the sight of the awed astronauts stumbling through a vast cave lit up by strange, quasi-phosphorous rocks. The earlier-seen giant "martian" rests an information pumping tentacle upon the head of the ship Commander.

VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
It was all fascinating stuff. The underground cities. The telekinesis of the Martian Elders. The ancient water ceremonies. And then there was "Mike."

The crew-members gradually all break from their individual reveries to stare down upon the still not clothed, but no longer giddy, MIKE. He is crumpled upon an oddly-shaped rock, quasi-fetal and dead-dead white.

THE VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
The astronauts were beyond anxious to bring this obviously human being to Earth for further study. The Martian Elders communicated that this was a good idea. Mike was not so sure. While the third planet from the Chanko was pretty from a distance, its unfamiliarity was intimidating. And yet, a little mysteriously, he was convinced into going.

The eyes of the Martian Elder suddenly flash red. Immediately, Mike's eyes open to flash red as well. Mike's body begins to warm to life a bit.

INT. SPACE VESSEL

On-board the earth's emissary vessel, tugged into a casual astronaut uniform, Mike undergoes some off-hand examination from the ship's DOCTOR NELSON, a crusty British woman. The viewer's viewpoint floats through the activity into a tight glimpse of Mike's percolating face.

VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
By the time of departure, Mike had become pleasantly obsessed with the physical similarities between himself and the visitors. Why did he resemble them more than his friends? He had given thought to his origins before, but such thoughts tended to cause savage skull agony.

Mike's eyes roll back into his head and he quivers back down into his whitened, withdrawn state. Dr. Nelson holds the others back with her arm. The viewer rises up away from Mike.

VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
In many ways, Mike was as much a mystery to himself as he was to the crew of the Envoy. He could not help but wonder how the planet Earth would change him...and how he would change the Planet Earth.

EXT. BACK IN SPACE

The wide image of the entire planet of Mars again fills the screen. A multi-million mile swish-pan takes the viewer into a similar all-encompassing view of the entire planet of Earth. As one moves closer and closer to the big blue marble, a cacophony of excited voices flare on the soundtrack.

EXT. DOWN TO EARTH--A BUSY WASHINGTON DC STREET

It is a busy street, somewhere in Washington DC, somewhere in the 21st Century. People are walking and talking, wearing a gentle perversion of 1940's fashion.

REGULAR JOE
Hey Shemp, did you lobe the news, he's coming down! Right here in D.C.

THE PAL
Who?

REGULAR JOE
The Man from Mars, you Quease. Plug in, pal. I gotta catch this cab. Plug in!

The Regular Joe rushes into a sleek taxi. The Pal moves toward a line of SCREENS against a nearby wall as the taxi rises up into the air behind him. The Pal tugs a wired rod from his IDENTITY BELT--A BLACK BELT THAT EVERYONE WEARS and plugs it into a hole at the bottom of one of the screens.

A cloud of images waft from the screen. A PLEASANTLY AUTHORITATIVE VOICE warbles over multi-dimensional visuals: international flags being shoved into red soil, wobbly POVs of mysterious caves, golfing Astronauts posing like tourists atop rocklike Martian citizens, very fuzzy teases of "Mike." Weather reports, strange sports scores, and other ephemera rip across simultaneously, too fast for a 20th century mind.

VOICE OF MEDIA
Hello. This is Media. The Focus of the Now is this: The so-called "Man from Mars" continues to baffle and fascinate anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike. Imagine the surprise of the first travelers to Mars finding a naked, 34-36 year old human being already waiting for them. The World Federation has kept images of this "Man" under wraps, but promise that soon he will be unveiled to all, after routine tests...

EXT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP--DAY

In a military trot, away from a parked space shuttle, a group of GREEN-UNIFORMED SOLDIERS wheel a humungous tube up into a big black, square wheeled van.

VOICE OF MEDIA (V.O.)
As Media speaketh, the mysterious caucasian extraterrestial is touching down at an undisclosed location...

Inside the tube is Mike, contorted in his uncomfortably familiar pained position. The black Van rises into the air.

INT. THE OFFICES OF MEDIA--DAY

The sight of citizens "plugging in" to the earlier-seen outdoor line of screens is viewed from a window above.

THE VOICE OF BEN CAXTON
It's one of the ones you always talk about. "Life on other planets." Journalists, for thousands of years, have been waiting to catch this fish. Whose hook does it end up on? Mine.

BEN CAXTON turns from the window, in a high-tech headset, the 21st century embodiment of Tough and Cynical Journalist. Tagging along with him is STANLEY, a gangly cub reporter in a HARD ROCK CAFE--ANTARTICA sweatshirt. They move through an awesome, arena-size version of a busy newsroom packed with screens and machines.

STANLEY
Yeah, Mr. Caxton, those Martians are pretty astonishing...

CAXTON
Shut up, kid. They're a disaster. Find out we're not alone in the universe and what do we get? A bunch of catatonic Rock-men. Face it, Stanley, the guy everybody is plugging in for is V.M.S.

STANLEY
VMS?

A FEMALE EDITOR, eating from a can labeled MOOD FOOD (HAPPY), bounds up to pull Caxton over to a computer screen.

FEMALE EDITOR
Mr. Caxton, we just got inforama that the plans to reopen Mexico have fallen through...

CAXTON
Again? Run with it...

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE--DAY

Caxton and Stanley rove into a large glass cubicle in the middle of Media Center. Caxton settles behind a desk.

CAXTON
VMS is the term the World Federation is using for Mr. Mars...Don't step on my grass!

Stanley avoids a patch of live grass absurdly squared off in the marble floor of Caxton's office.

STANLEY
Sorry Mr. Caxton...Of human origin, martian upbringing, how did he get up there? Brainwashed farmer picked up by a flying saucer and dropped off on Big Red.

CAXTON
Any takers for a portal in time? Man, when I was your age, I got paid to make up this kind of shit. Oh, I want this guy!
(into headset)
Frequency 19...tap me to the World Federation...

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOF--DAY

The Black Van lands upon a roof. The soldiers bustle out with the silver tube. Dr. Nelson paces beside, examining the inert blob that is VMS.

EXT. THE CAPITOL BUILDING

The familiar Capitol building of Washington D.C. now has a strange globe matted atop it (with a neon WF).

INT. ROOM IN THE CAPITOL BUILDING--DAY

A severe German man, KARL BERQUIST, in a high-tech headset of his own, leans against a pillar.

BERQUIST
I don't think it is in the best interest of the World Federation to tell Media--specifically you, Mr. Caxton--our guest's whereabouts. Be grateful for the film of the Martians.

INT. THE MEDIA CENTER--DAY

Ben Caxton snorts into his headset, sauntering about his admiring staff.

CAXTON
Yeah, yeah, life on other planets-- What have you done for me, lately? Listen, these Martians...I know-- they're fascinating, intelligent creatures from whom we have much to learn from--not exactly the most exciting guys in the solar system. Herr Berquist, we want the naked guy. Hey..Hey..People don't just watch the news anymore. They wear it. It is a physical part of them. Like thumbs. At least get me a noun and an adjective from the Sec-Gen...

INT. THE CAPITOL ROOM--DAY

Berquist smirks as a cabal of dignified ELITE convoy by.

BERQUIST
Caxton, your ego is bigger than the globe atop our building. The Secretary General would love to chat...

SECRETARY-GENERAL JOSEPH DOUGLAS turns from the group to violently shake his head at Berquist.

BERQUIST
...but Mr. Douglas happens to be a busy-bee.

INT. FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

American hardass Secretary-General Douglas closes a set of double doors. The other Executives of the World Federation take their places at a decadently colossal conference table.

ASIAN FEDERATION EXEC
What is his condition?

DOUGLAS
Safe. He's safe. We got him sequestered over at Chuck Heston Hospital, right under everyone's noses. Obviously, we got tests they couldn't perform on the ship that they...

FEMALE AFRICAN FEDERATION EXEC
Douglas, we know what you told Media. What's really going on?

FRENCH FEDERATION EXEC
People of sector France are, how you say, ang-ious, to experience this, this man, this V-hem-S--

DOUGLAS
Don't get all global on me, Henri. And will you stop pretending you don't know how to speak English. It's been the planet's official language for nine fucking years now.

RUSSIAN EXEC
Mr. Secretary-General, do not change the subject....

INTIMIDATING OFF-SCREEN VOICE
The subject...

Suitably intimidated, the Execs submissively turn toward the other end of the table to DRYDEN, the smooth, string-pulling British Executive of the Federation. He authoritatively launches from his chair to circle the table, passing out a single sheet of paper--face down--to each exec.

DRYDEN
Who in the bloody hell is VMS? Obviously his parents are human for he is human. And you can probably deduce...Well, on the other side of that paper is an end to the mystery of his origin. The truth, you will find, is...interesting. But the truth, gentleman, must absolutely be maintained as a mystery. You have 40 seconds...

The Federation Execs whip around the sheets before them and feverishly read, the sockets widening in fascination.

DRYDEN
We all became one government some time ago, but only now do I feel we are having our first shared experience: An Alien. This isn't somebody else's earthquake, somebody else's riot, somebody else's war. Today, we are a planet.

Each paper suddenly disintergrates into a liquid that immediately evaporates into the table with a sizzling sound. Dryden savors the sight of the Execs looking to him like awed children.

DRYDEN
As I said...interesting.

INT. MEDIA CENTER

Caxton bounds back into his glass cubicle; Stanley in tow.

STANLEY
I can't believe you let Berquist flail you like that...

CAXTON
Kid. Pretend I'm not stupid. The Man from Mars has been on his way here for the last three months...You really think I haven't tracked where they're stashing him? Have no fear, my Ace is in Place.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

GILLIAN BOARDMAN clacks down the hall in futuristic Florence Nightingale gear, talking to herself in a way that makes one wonder whether this sly beauty really is a nurse.

GILLIAN
The 21st century has produced many great medical achievements...so why is being a nurse such a sucky job...

A strange micro-recording device suddenly crashes out from underneath Gillian's skirt. A mini-CD rolls out of the device. Gillian rocket-scoops it up.

GILLIAN
(mock-heroic)
Gillian Boardman, Media Ace.

Suddenly, a stern group of ANXIETY DISPOSAL SOLDIERS (the green uniformed men seen earlier) march by. Gillian scuffles around a floating hover-gurney and refastens the recording device. Gillian then mock-beams up to the Front desk and a sneezing HEAD OF STAFF.

HEAD OF STAFF
Greetings and salutations, nurse..

GILLIAN
Hey Ted, what's the focus with all the pretty green Anxiety-Disposal soldiers around here?

BERQUIST
(cutting in)
Nosy little chihuahua, aren't you?

Gillian swerves to Berquist, the German Federation Spokesman and A TERRIFYING BODYGUARD clacking to a suave halt beside her. Pretending to ignore his obnoxiousness, Gillian peeps with mock-effervescence.

GILLIAN
Welcome to Heston Hospital. How can we help you?

BERQUIST
Are you for real? Word of advice, dear--
Stay Stupid.

GILLIAN
(as he struts off)
Yeah...Stay charming.

Berquist and his bodyguard rumble into a strangely modulated, clear elevator-tube. A monitor shows the elevator whooshing up to LEVEL 6. Gillian sharply takes notice.

HEAD OF STAFF
(sniffling)
You shouldn't mess with that guy Berquist. He's an Exec at the WF...

GILLIAN
Boy, I think we all learned a lesson this afternoon...and Ted, you know they found a cure for the cold about seven years ago.

HEAD OF STAFF
I know, but I'm allergic to it. It's a funny story, you see I...

GILLIAN
(pre-occupied)
That is a funny story...Excus-ay.

INT. STAIRCASE--LATER

Gillian excitedly crouches down upon a staircase. She whips open a stylish case, and immediately commands a list of names upon a revealed computer screen.

GILLIAN
All the patients on the sixth floor...please...Frown. Guess it's silly of me to think they're just going to put down "Man from Mars." Wait a sixty... Mrs. Bankerson, Suite 606...

Gillian wavers up a knowing grin and slaps shut the case.

INT. SIXTH FLOOR--LATER

Gillian rustles through the corridor thoroughfare, muttering down to her hidden recorder.

GILLIAN
Highly poor, highly old coma victim Mrs. Bankerson gets her own suite?... Does not compute, Caxton. Perfect cover for the Martian. Posted soldiers would only call attention...

Gillian drifts by a room digitally reading on its door "606-- Mrs. Bankerson." Faking a yawn, Gillian makes a sudden dart inside.

INT. MRS. BANKERSON'S ROOM--DUSK

Gillian's face falls as she takes in the lone figure in the room--a docile, slumbering MRS. BANKERSON.

GILLIAN
Mrs. Bankerson, what are you actually doing in the room the computer says you're in....
(down to recorder)
Well Caxton. Brillant in theory..

Again, Gillian's recorder flops out of her skirt down to the tile. It's small silver disc component rolls out of the popped open device.....and THROUGH the back wall of the room.

Gillian does a slight head-wobble at the sight of her recordable CD being swallowed up by the wall. She then smiles, touching out her hand...through the wall.

GILLIAN
God, Holograms. How passe'...

She plunges her entire body through the simulated wall.

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL--DUSK

Gillian scans down to the quirky set of holographic projectors on the ground that create the "wall." She backs into the bed of the almost-completely-adapted-and-healthy MIKE.

MIKE
Hi.

GILLIAN
Hi.

MIKE
Hi.

GILLIAN
Hi--don't say "hi" again--got the Hi covered.
(overcome)
Go to all the trouble to sneak in here and I don't have anything to ask. How's Mars...this time of year?-- Jesus Christ..

MIKE
My bowels move excellent. Hi.

GILLIAN
Hi--that's grand, really--I gotta get all this on disc..

Clutching her recorder, Gillian kneels down to search for her disc. The highly intrigued Mike winds up to stare down to her. He studies her every movement in rapture.

MIKE
Woman. Are you?

GILLIAN
(awkwardly amused)
Sure. I...am.

MIKE
Intrigueresting. Why woman-not man-- man-not-woman. More penis/no penis. Not just. Right? Wrong?

GILLIAN
Uh, yeah. Mars doesn't have women, does it? Not a lot of men either, huh? Cept you...what was the question?

MIKE
Men/Woman-feel difference--Feel--do not grok.

GILLIAN
"Grok?" What's grok? My first Martian word. I love it. Hold on--

Gillian pulls back a small curtain, revealing a beautiful 21st Century water cooler. She bends toward her found disc. Mike lays a transfixed gaze past her to the water cooler, strangely whimpering out in pure pleasure.

GILLIAN
What? This? It's just water. What? You wanna cup?

MIKE
WhuhWhuhWah. Wah-ter. Wanna.

Mike swings out of the bed and like an over-excited toddler, he bumbles out a couple steps before collapsing in a heap. Gillian quickly lugs him into a sitting position against the bed.

GILLIAN
Tiger, tiger, back to bed. There's jet lag and then there's jet lag...

MIKE
You happy me very.

GILLIAN
(chuckling)
You happy me, too.

Gillian fills the dixie cup, then kneels. She holds the cup out to him, touched by Mike's quivery reverence. He whispers.

MIKE
Drink deep brother...Share you. Share I. Hi.

GILLIAN
Hi.

Now feeling a little hypnotized herself, Gillian lifts the cup to her lips and delicately sips. She reaches the cup out to Mike who soulfully sips, not breaking eye contact.

Mike begins to purr in the screechy, non-phonetic Martian tongue. Hearing the sounds of scuffling, Gillian puts a finger to his lips. She bolts up.

INT. MRS. BANKERSON'S SIDE OF THE ROOM--DUSK

Noises outside the door. Secretary-General Douglas enters into the first part of the room with an entourage made up of British Exec Dryden, German Exec Berquist, and Dr. Nelson.

BERQUIST
An Anxiety Disposal Unit directly in front of the door would only call attention. The Holo-security System allows us a certain freedom...

DOUGLAS
Top-notch, Berquist.

The group parades through the wall.

INT. MIKE'S SIDE OF THE ROOM--DUSK

They immediately freak at the sight of Mike happily plopped on the floor. A flustered Dr. Nelson lifts him to the bed.

MIKE
Woman water brother. "What? You wanna cup?" Hi!

DR. NELSON
Mike, what did we say about babbling? Bowels move?

MIKE
Excellent.

DRYDEN
Stop calling him "Mike."

NELSON
(mischievous)
That's his name, isn't it? Unless you want to get formal: "Valentine Micheal Smith."

BERQUIST
Damn you! Did you lobe this crusty bitch?

DRYDEN
Doc, extremely classified inforama was given to you to help you. So please, some courtesy. Say "Mike" again and you'll die tomorrow of some mystery disease you picked up in space. And I'm not being witty.

DOUGLAS
Dryden, please--now Doctor, is this man Smith going to understand what I have to tell him?

NELSON
With all due respect, your Excellency, "this man Smith" is not a man. Maybe by ancestry, but sure not by environment. He thinks like a Martian, feels like a Martian. He's been brought up by a race that has almost nothing in common with us. They don't have sex. They eat their dead. They communicate telepath--

DRYDEN
Dr. Nelson...with all due respect...Exit.

DR. NELSON
I should be present during all..

BERQUIST
We insist...

Confused, Mike squeaks out a sentence of Martian.

DR. NELSON
That was an expression--"I am an egg"--
means he's confused. I still think...

DRYDEN
I know. I wish you would stop.

Dr. Nelson is too exhausted to enforce her anger. She departs.

INT. MRS. BANKERSON'S SIDE OF THE ROOM--DUSK

Dr. Nelson huffs past the ever-comatose Mrs. Bankerson. As the door slams, an also-smooshed-in-the-bed Gillian pokes her head out from underneath the sheets to further listen.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
Okay, give me the paper.

INT. MIKE'S SIDE OF THE ROOM

Berquist hands an ominous sheet of paper and a pen to Douglas, who in turn holds the items before Mike.

DOUGLAS
So "Mike", uh, I need you to sign this.
Basically, it says, you see, that you
give us permission to...Do you know how
to sign something.. Does he...

BERQUIST
Use his goddamn thumb.

Mike again caws in Martian....with a bit of worry.

DOUGLAS
Come on, you're on Earth now. Speak
English...stop being an "egg."

MIKE
Look...the astronauts me teach.

In seeming milliseconds, Mike folds the "contract" into a paper airplane and throws it through the holo-Wall.

INT. MRS. BANKERSON'S SIDE OF THE ROOM

The paper airplane flutters past a worried Gillian. She glares to her empty recorder.

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
The most powerful men on this
world...look at us. This little
intergalactic shit is the key to
fortunes known and unknown...

INT. MIKE'S SIDE OF THE ROOM

Dryden casually-obliviously steps on and cracks Gillian's disc. He uncomfortably matches smiles with a not quite comprehending Mike. Much of the scene should be played through Mike's curious-nervous POV. He imitates Berquist making a fist.

BERQIST
Envoy's compulog said he went wackaroni at the thought of coming to Earth. One of the big guys, the Elders, gives him a wink--Pow! Instant enthusiasm. I don't trust him.

DRYDEN
What are you doing here, Mike? Business or pleasure? Say something.

MIKE
Something.
(raising Dixie)
Drink deep my brother...

With an intrigued smile, Dryden takes the cup, sips it, and hands it back to Mike, who finishes it off. Dryden manuevers a lamp in the room in a way that bathes Mike in a holy light.

DRYDEN
The Good Alien: Men and Women of Earth, I come in peace. I bring you the knowledge of our superior intelligence so that you may teach and grow in love.

Dryden smoothly tosses a blanket over the lamp, causing Mike's face to be sinisterly shadowed.

DRYDEN
The Bad Alien: Men and Women of Earth, I have come to destroy your inferior Orb. You are a blight upon the universe. Die, Earthlings, Die. Which one are you, Mike? Neither? Both?

BERQUIST
Move to Plan Doppleganger, sir?

DOUGLAS
Damn, is it necessary?

DRYDEN
He's a Pandora's Box that must be opened in a controlled environment. Plan Doppleganger goes into immediate effect.

The Trio turns through the holo-wall. A door is heard closing. Gillian suddenly pops in through the wall. Mike excitedly moves into a sitting position.

GILLIAN
Mike...if that's your real name...listen, those men, they're very...I don't know what schemes they got bubbling, but wait for me, I'll help you...I'm not really a nurse, see I...wait for me.

MIKE
Waiting is a goodness.

Mike folds his hands on his lap, a statue of patience. Gillian allows herself another touched smile before disappearing off.

INT. MEDIA CENTER--NIGHT

The bustling Media Center has settled for the night. Swing music lulls from a radio. Caxton and a pack of proteges are morosely crashed before a multi-dimensional stereovision set.

FEMALE EDITOR
Those cwazy Fosterites...

CUB REPORTER STANLEY
Yeah, the footage was just transed to us from West Carolina. Gets pretty graphic...Basically, the three Fosterites killed Hawkins and his family, then burned all copies of the documentary he was making about their religion... Oh, here's the finale...

ON THE SCREEN

A shaky, hand-held POV shows three FOSTERITES--two men and one woman, stride out from a building, hand in hand. They wear stark black uniforms with red trim. A set of wired explosives are strapped across the trio.

THE THREE FOSTERITES
We are not the Right! We are not the Left! We are the Above!

The trio of religious terrorists raise their hands together and explode into the camera.

CAXTON

bellows an impressed howl.

CAXTON
Say what you will about these Fosterites...They deliver the goods.

FEMALE EDITOR SHEILA
They're sick, Caxton. Before he dies, Reverend John Foster comes upon the brillant idea that the reactionaries of the right and the radicals of the left could be married at the same Politically correct, Morally correct altar.

CAXTON
So they're sick. All Religions have a holier-than-thou attitude, Sheila. These guys actually work for a living.
(into head-set)
The landing of VMS is obiviously still our primary. Number 2 the Fosterites...

Caxton brightens. Out of the nurse uniform and in some stylish 1940's-meets-21st-Century fashion, Gillian struts into the newsroom, taking off a "His Girl Friday" hat.

STANLEY
Gillian! Where have you been? We thought Caxton here had put you back on the Moon beat.

GILLIAN
Shuttle up 250,000 miles to get pawed by a bunch of horny miners? Never again.

STANLEY
You're working on something big, aren't you, Jill? Fess...

CAXTON
Leave her be, Stanley...

GILLIAN
Yeah Stanley. Hey, where's that contact you were bragging about? The one who was going to get me Jubal Harshaw's address...

STANLEY
Maybe if you came in and looked at your desk once in a while...

Gillian happily rushes to her desk and yanks up a pink piece of plastic that has been stuck into a framed photograph of the charismatic, bearded JUBAL HARSHAW, reading from a book called <u>SOMETHING IN MY I</u>.

FEMALE EDITOR SHEILA
Jubal Harshaw! What about that ancient recluse? We've been trying to get copy on Mr. Crusader for the People ever since he went Hermit. What makes your think you...

GILLIAN
We're spirits kindred. I was training to be a space station social director and then I read Something in My I. Then my parents marched with him for..

CAXTON
Boardman. Any day now...

Gillian cuts off her giddiness and scampers...

INT. CAXTON'S CUBICLE--NIGHT

Caxton swings behind a desk. Closing the glass cubicle door behind her, Gillian lights up a cigarette.

CAXTON
Is that a "cigarette?" Put it out-- just what I need, one of my reporters in prison...

GILLIAN
I deserve it. I even deserve this...

With goofy-sultry demeanor, Gillian shakes off her shoes and begins a ballet across Caxton's prized grass patch.

CAXTON
I think I liked the world better when women weren't allowed a sense of humor. So...how's nursing?

GILLIAN
(blowing smoke rings)
So...He's there.

CAXTON
Yes!--I'm sorry we've had to plant you for the last month laser-evapping bedpan residue, but whoa, what a payoff! We gotta get Images on this guy. A fiber-op in his room...

GILLIAN
Ben, listen, Mike is a total innocent...

CAXTON
"Mike?"

GILLIAN
Yeah...as in Valentine Michael Smith.

CAXTON
(dazed delight)
As in V.M.S....My God. "Mike"--so chummy. You two boyfriend-girlfriend...

GILLIAN
No...but we're "water brothers"-- whatever that means...

CAXTON
You...you've actually interacted?

GILLIAN
Something like that.
(seriously)
There's more...

OUTSIDE CAXTON'S CUBICLE

The other Reporters jealously watch Caxton getting excited.

STANLEY
He lets her walk on the grass...

INT. CAXTON'S CUBICLE

CAXTON
The Secretary-General was there in the room-- incredible! That paper they were trying to get VMS to sign was probably for merchandising rights...

GILLIAN
It was more than that. The mystery that is Valentine Michael Smith--how did he get that name, and how did he get his human butt on Mars--is not a mystery to the World Federation. They have answers and those answers, from the way they talked to that doctor, are the kind you kill for.

CAXTON
World Federation wants to totally set the tempo nice and easy and fascist. Let's take it to them with everything we got--You did golden, Boardman.

A lion tamed, Caxton tenderly reaches out to Gillian--when suddenly all the lights in the Media Center (and everywhere else in the world) go out.

EXT. SPACE

In complete silence, a vivid red light illuminates upon a majestic satellite.

EXT. THE FAMILIAR WASHINGTON D.C. STREET

The earlier-seen line of screens light up upon the now-darkened Washington DC street.

VOICE OF MEDIA
THIS IS AN ALL-LIFE EMERGENCY. INTERRUPTION COMING TO YOU FROM WORLD-WIDE SATELLITE 17.

INT. THE MEDIA CENTER

Fellow reporters scrambling about, Caxton coolly looks down to the lit-up line of screens on the street below. Both he and Gillian turn to the Center's own screen with trepidation.

VOICE OF MEDIA
MEETING THE MAN FROM MARS WITH WORLD FEDERATION SECRETARY-GENERAL, AMERICAN JOSEPH DOUGLAS. Brought to you by Simpson's Mood Food-- unnaturally safe, indescribably good, now in new brain-suggestive flavors: Sexy, Witty, and Tired.

The image of Joseph Douglas sitting comfortably in a futuristic armchair comes on.

EXT. OUTDOOR SPORTING EVENT AT DARKENED STADIUM--NIGHT

The spectators and players of an outdoor futuristic sport look to the scoreboard in rapt attention.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Friends of the Federation, we stand at the dawn of a threshold of something vivid--the realization we are not alone. But hey, I'm not interrupting you folks tonight for a high and mighty speech...

EXT. SWEDISH FARM--DAY

Swedish Farmers drop their wheat bales to gawk at a screen set up in a field.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
I have a visitor...We all have a visitor. Say Hello to a fellow mammal...

The viewer's viewpoint on the screen moves to SOMEONE WHO LOOKS A LOT LIKE MIKE--BUT IS NOT MIKE, sitting on a wheelchair, gawking and gleaming in perfect acting class ET form.

INT. THE MEDIA CENTER

Of course, the viewer and Gillian can see the charade. The latter is ready to explode as her colleagues watch in wonder.

MIKE IMPOSTER (SCREEN)
Thank you, Mis-ter Secre-tar-y Gen-er-al, it-is-good-to-be-on-your-Earth...

GILLIAN
Ben...

CAXTON
Quiet Boardman...

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Speaking on behalf of every single person in the world out there, we know you must be exhausted, but...

INT. TOKYO SHOPPING MALL--DAY

In broad daylight, the Asian patrons of a Tokyo Shopping Mall stop their shopping to stare upon the historic interview.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
we just wanted to ask what you think of the third planet from the sun, so far?

MIKE IMPOSTER (SCREEN)
Earth is planet of many unique and wonderful people...Everyday learn something exciting and new.

EXT. A SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD--NIGHT

The only life in a cluster of adorable homes seems to be coming from flickering TV sets, needless to say, on the same channel.

INT. A SUBURBAN HOME--NIGHT

DAD, MOM, THE KIDS, and A DUTIFUL CANINE watch T.V.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
What do you want to do most?

MIKE IMPOSTER (SCREEN)
I want to splash your oceans, taste your rainbows, drink your Cokes, visit your Disneylands...

INT. THE MEDIA CENTER--NIGHT

Caxton spins from the coziness on-screen. Gillian grips his elbows, tugging him from the others.

CAXTON
So much for the scoop of the early 21st century. See that, they're buddies. Federation must've felt us breathing down their necks...shit...shit!

GILLIAN
Ben...That is not the Man from Mars.

CAXTON
But..he stuttered. He referred to Earth in the third person. I mean, you don't think Douglas would fake...

GILLIAN
Caxton, I was there! I don't forget a guy I shared water with.
(more)

GILLIAN (Cont'd)
That scary British Exec Dryden mentioned something called Plan Doppleganger. It's a German word that made the cut when the world went English. It means...

CAXTON
(watching screen)
I know what it means. So what, you're really saying this guy on the telestereovision is some double and not our favorite Martian...

MIKE IMPOSTER (SCREEN)
(nodding off)
Feel safe...good...sleepy...

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Ah, now you go ahead and rest. This is Joe Douglas signing off from Sector America.

The lights of the Media Center immediately zap back on. Caxton notices Gillian is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MEDIA CENTER--NIGHT

Gillian bounds from a ludicrously-fast-revolving door. She haplessly shouts up to a whooshing-upward-cab. Caxton huffs out behind her.

GILLIAN
Taxi...

CAXTON
Gillian. Of course, I believe you. You realize what this means...

GILLIAN
The real Valentine Michael Smith is in triple-mega-trouble...

CAXTON
Could be dead already. Most likely scenario is that they're going to sequester him away for a long series of experimentation while they have the fake, fun-for-the-whole-familial-unit version of Mikey parade across every sector plopping kids on his knees at flying car shows.

GILLIAN
This is bad. This is...We can't just...

CAXTON
We have to just. Being God of Media makes me a little cocky--until times like these where you find out about real power. Gillian, if you're not careful, you'll end up on the same island with your water brother, allowed mail every alternate leap year. Let's regroup tomorrow. There's still some things we can...

GILLIAN
Yeah, okay, tomorrow...

Gillian backs and curls into a landing Air-Transport-Taxi.

INT. AIR-TRANSPORT-TAXI--NIGHT

The Taxi is driverless. A SPEAKER on the dash crackles.

TAXI
Where to?

GILLIAN
(waving to Ben)
Shut up. I'm thinking....

INT. THE SIXTH FLOOR--NIGHT

Two Anxiety Disposal Men round a corner, chatting. Scurrying behind them, Gillian bashes into the room.

INT. MIKE'S SIDE OF THE ROOM

Gillian flashes through the fake wall of the hospital room to see Valentine Michael Smith sitting in the exact same waiting pose with the exact same patient smile he had when she left hours ago.

MIKE
Hi.

GILLIAN
Wha-when I said for you to wait for me, it didn't mean...

MIKE
Waiting is a goodness. You were away, brother, now you are here. Look! I grow strong. I walk mighty.

Mike bounds off the bed and swaggers across the room like a child doing a Popeye imitation. Gillian tries to rein him.

GILLIAN
Hey, hey, mighty man, your hosts have terrible things planned for you. We have to get out of...

BERQUIST (O.S.)
Now, now, what's the hurry?

With a deft zap, the holographic wall disappears to show Berquist sitting at the edge of the dependably-snoozing Mrs. Bankerson's bed, twirling a remote.

MIKE
Hi.

BERQUIST
Hi. One of my staff reviewed the this afternoon's hallway surveillance tapage. I'm glad you came back. Figured you would.

MIKE
I eat a balanced breakfast.

GILLIAN
Mike, stay back. What are all these secrets you're keeping, Berquist? What makes you think you can get away with hiding..

Berquist smugly holds up a finger to shush Gillian, while operating a cellularesque device. Sensing tension, Mike stops gleefully strutting about.

BERQUIST
It's Karl Berquist, in the room. I have the intruder. Clear the hallway. I don't want a melodrama when I cart this gash out of here. Ready up some ground transport.
(clicking off)
Now miss, is it really so dark and nasty of the World Federation to want to check a Foreigner out in a distraction-free environment?

GILLIAN
And what happens if he's not the WF's definition of a good Earthling? Does his brain get put in a jar?

BERQUIST
Who are you and what makes you think we won't toss <u>your</u> nectarine-brain in a jar...then throw away the jar. Mike, go back to bed. Say goodbye to your little friend..

Gillian suddenly swings her trusty attache case into Berquist's neck, cracking him back onto the bed. Gillian latches to the hand of a confused and terrified Mike, pulling him out of the room.

INT. THE SIXTH FLOOR CORRIDOR--NIGHT

Gillian sprints from the room. Mike, having just mastered walking on Earth, is having a hard time with running, unable to move without one foot on the ground.

MIKE
My walking is not running. Sorry please...

GILLIAN
It's called "gravity." Deal with it.

Berquist's Terrifying Bodyguard thunders before them. Gillian brakes and exhales defeat. The Terrifying Bodyguard swings back to launch a pistol-whip. Gillian cringes her eyes shut, but the blow never comes. She wavers her eyes open. The Terrifying Bodyguard is nowhere to be seen in the entire corridor.

Gillian spins to see a stunned Berquist stumble down the hallway. He looks from Gillian to a wildly shivering Mike.

BERQUIST
You...Martian.

Berquist yanks an amazing gun from his blazer. Mike's eyes flash light-blue. Berquist completely disappears. Mike crumples down, regressing into his feverish white ball state. Fighting her own panic, Gillian turns to a hover-gurney floating against a wall.

GILLIAN
Gurney...

The viewer's viewpoint focuses upon a uniquely modulated cameralike device in the wall. In its reflection, the Gurney automatically buzzes toward Gillian and Mike.

EXT. THE ROOF--NIGHT

Crunching through a rooftop door, Gillian is riding the gliding-in-air gurney. Mike has been haphazardly covered with a sheet. Gillian bounds off the gurney before a control box marked TRANSPORT. With her Identity Belt, she plugs in and out of the box. Gillian growls to the sky.

GILLIAN
Come on...come on...

A Taxi-Transport docks down, its doors screeching open. With her case, Gillian crushes the transport box. She then sails the gurney up to the door, heaving Mike's drained carcass into the back.

INT. THE TAXI-TRANSPORT

The doors squeak shut. The Speaker-box crackles...

TAXI
Where to?

GILLIAN
That question again...

Anxiety Disposal soldiers plow out of the rooftop door, rustling out weaponry.

GILLIAN
For now, let's try "up."

The Taxi aches up into the sky. Anxiety Disposal Officers fire up some stray shots. Gillian opens her attache and plugs inside. Her case responds audio/visually.

SCREEN
All calls to Ben Caxton are currently being intercepted ala Security Act LH7-DH8. Thank you and please wait for the trace.

Gillian unplugs and exhales. She lights up a cigarette, setting off an alarm in the car.

TAXI
YOU HAVE OFFENDED...

GILLIAN
(putting it out)
Okay, okay...

TAXI
Again: Where to?

GILLIAN
I don't...!

Gillian stops herself and slowly pulls out the pink piece of plastic with Jubal Harshaw's address on it.

EXT. JUBAL HARSHAW'S RESIDENCE--DAY

The viewer's viewpoint floats down behind a vast, tucked away estate. Like a bear in hibernation, with Father Time hair styling, author-ex-activist JUBAL HARSHAW snores upon a chaise lounge, before a glistening pool.

As his familiar voice returns, his staff is seen bubbling around him: ANNE, a mature but ageless African-American woman in meditation; MIRIAM, an exquisite, but goofy waif rising out of the pool; DUKE, a lumbering Ox raking leaves, and DORCAS, an extremely androgynous Asian, whispering into a head-set.

THE VOICE OF JUBAL (V.O.)
Guess this is where I come in. The great Jubal Harshaw, half the man I never was, writing best-selling turds of every flavor using ten different pseudonyms. I had a nicely exploited staff of two women, one man, and whatever Dorcas was this week. I had tricked myself into irritable contentment...at least for the next five minutes...

Jubal awakens with a bark to a Anne, who bites into an enormous blue apple.

JUBAL
Front!

ANNE
Listening...

JUBAL
Concept: "A little kitten wanders into a church on Christmas Eve to get warm. Besides being starved, frozen, and lost, the kitten has an injured paw.."

ANNE
Name of Author?

JUBAL
I think we better use "Molly Wadsworth" again. Title: The Other Manger.

ANNE
Ouch.

JUBAL
I agree. Opening line: "Snow had been falling..."

DORCAS
Sorry Jubal, but Zurich says it has a deal on a Warhol...

JUBAL
A what?

DORCAS
Late 20th century...Soup cans. Marilyn Monroe.

JUBAL
Oh, that fucking guy. Pass... Where was I? "Snow had been falling since..."

MIRIAM
(looking up)
This is going to sound weird. "We've got company."

JUBAL
What did you...?

A Taxi-Transport-Car sputters overhead, dropping over the house with a gently crunching sound.

EXT. IN FRONT OF JUBAL'S ESTATE--DAY

Jubal and his three assistants charge out the front door. The amiable handyman in suspenders, DUKE, has beat them out there. Behind him, the taxi is a smoking heap.

DUKE
Been a while since one of your crackpot fans tried something, boss.

Panting and babbling, Gillian kicks out the door, lugging out the dead-white quasi-corpse of Valentine Michael Smith.

GILLIAN
Gillian Boardman--ace at Media. Mr. Harshaw, this is not an interview, although I think you're the most important figure of the 21st... uh, that's the Man from Mars...switched cabs all the way--Hot wired this one and then dumped my I.D. belt into one going to Sector Florida to throw off...

ANNE
Tranquility, baby. Tranquility.

MIRIAM
From where did she say this guy's from?

JUBAL
Doesn't matter...He's in heaven, now.

GILLIAN
No, no, he's not dead. He's Martian. Guy on the TSV special was a fake.

DORCAS
TSV special?

GILLIAN
Haven't you people plugged in?

JUBAL
Sorry, run on batteries myself. Never much liked the belt, to say nothing of all the global bullshit that comes with it.
(to body)
This is hopeless. I know a little something about medicine and that is...Never think you're God. I'll be damned; this man is alive.

Everyone huddles down around the percolating visitor.

MIKE
I'm Mike. Bowels move excellent. Hi.

JUBAL
Hi...

Curling out of his pained fetal, brightening with color, Mike stares up at his dazed new friends, content as a cat in a lap.

INT. THE FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The executives of the Federation sweat beneath a happy image of Mike in his hospital bed on a conference room screen.

ASIAN FEDERATION EXEC
Turns out Caxton planted her as a nurse about four weeks ago...

FEMALE AFRICAN EXECUTIVE
An empty taxi with her indentity belt was clicked south of Miami. She could be anywhere, but without her belt she can't buy anything or call anyone.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION EXEC
We put Media on Oral/Visual quarantine the second VMS turned up missing. Procedure in a crisis like this...

DOUGLAS
"A crisis like this?" Gee Boris, what else did we do all the times Aliens from Mars escaped our custody?...Do you people realize what is at stake? Did you read Dryden's memo before it disintegrated? Where does Berquist fit in all this, the incompetent little...

FRENCH EXEC HENRI
Ques-ti-on not "Where he fits" just "Where?" We can't find him.

DRYDEN
Let me remind everyone that as far as the public is concerned, the Man from Mars is that Mime from Seattle that we used last night in the telestereovision special. That means "panic" does not leave this room and it means when we do find the real thing, we can do whatever we want...

Dryden remotes the Mike's image off the screen.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ESTATE--DAY

Mike is snoozing gently in a comfy bed. The viewer's viewpoint inhales out to reveal Jubal outside the window, intrigued against his will. Anne serenely sidles up.

ANNE
It's true. In case you were wondering. Him being from Mars. Apparently, there was an expedition to the planet and...

JUBAL
You found that radio, didn't you? And fixed it...Traitor.
(more)

JUBAL (Cont'd)
He's obviously of human origin. How did he get on Mars? Why's he in so much trouble?

ANNE
Somewhat more fascinating than dictating crappy il-literature. Yes?

JUBAL
You would think...Now where was I?

INT. KITCHEN/DINING AREA

Jubal and Anne rove into the kitchen. Miriam is cooking up a luncheon feast, banging various gadgets into working.

JUBAL
"He fell to his knees and said, 'The detective is right. I didn't kill your daughter. I am your daughter...'"

ANNE
Name of Author?

JUBAL
You have to ask? Max St. Maxwell...Oh. Gillian, right?

Gillian is revealed in the kitchen, arms-crossed.

GILLIAN
Do you people one of these crazy gizmos known as a phone?

JUBAL
And who are you going to call, Ace? Anybody we buzz who could actually help is probably on Intercept.

GILLIAN
Maybe I don't know exactly what to do...You seem to be only good at what not to do...Mike's rights need to be protected.

As Gillian launches a tirade on Jubal, she casually then voraciously nibbles at the dish Miriam is cooking up.

GILLIAN
Your writing meant something. Everything. You led the March that stopped WW 2 1/2. You were a fighter for all of humanity and now you're..Are you really the author Max St. Maxwell? He's ter-rible. You're terrible.
(to grub)
Jesus, what is this?

JUBAL
It's called Real Food. An invention from the 20th century. "Fighter for humanity"--was that the pearl you dropped. One: Is Humanity worth fighting for? Two: who says humanity wants to be fought for in the first place? Three: "Mike's rights?"--why should he have something no one else has? Four:..

An other-worldly squawk cuts into Jubal's soliloquy.

EXT. BACK OF THE ESTATE--DAY

Everyone rushes out to see Mike, in badly fitting pajamas, excitedly staggering toward the glorious swimming pool.

MIKE
Water....

GILLIAN
He likes the water.

JUBAL
That pool probably has more H2O than the city he grew up in...

Mike marches right into the pool. The others watch in deadpan fascination. And watch. Mike is not coming up.

GILLIAN
He likes the water.

Anne, Dorcas, and Miriam look to each other in worry, before all three dive forward.

INT. THE POOL

The earnest trio swirl down. Their bubbling faces go from concern to wonder as they stare down to Mike who has taken a stark standing position of perfect peace at the bottom of the pool.

EXT. OUTSIDE POOL--DAY

The two women and Dorcas surface, treading with their water bro.

MIKE
The water--it you all cherishes. Sharing--it is a great goodness. As is much-hoped-for grokking.

MIRIAM
You're like...so cool.

Standing above the swimmers, Jubal and Gillian are less giddy, but not without rapture.

JUBAL
"Grokking?"

GILLIAN
I think it means "understanding" something or someone...in a way I don't quite understand.

JUBAL
You can stay...I want you to stay..
(back to grumpy)
Well, until the Anxiety Disposal Cossacks come and butcher us like pigs...

INT. MISSION CONTROL--DAY

Green uniformed Anxiety Disposal soldiers buzz about the glittering technology of a mission control center. On an overhead screen is another bogus press conference with Sec-Gen Douglas heroically patting the fake Man from Mars.

FEMALE OFFICER
Our Smartware says the subject still hasn't plugged in. Means she's found sanctuary..

COCKY YOUNGER OFFICER
What's the focus with this Gillian Boardman babe-atron, anyway? Is she really worth the time of every available officer of the A.D.
(to screen)
Oh look, it's that Martian. He is just the cutest...

A chair suddenly jetttisons into the screen, anhilating the fake Martian image. All sheepishly turn to a composed Dryden.

DRYDEN
My apologies. Completely my fault. I made an error in clarity. This woman...she has stolen something very precious from the World Federation. We need to get it back. Gillian Boardman's death is worth more than your entire lives.

The Anxiety Disposal soldiers crank into spooked overdrive.

EXT. ATOP AND AROUND THE HARSHAW ESTATE--DUSK

Mike stares out to a beautiful set of mountains. He is atop the roof of the Harshaw house with a sitting Gillian.

MIKE
Remind me Elders. But no. What?

GILLIAN
They're the Poconos. I mean, mountains. It's not like you don't have them on Mars, bud.
(more)

GILLIAN (Cont'd)
(body heave)
Oh Mike, you're so...you have no idea the trouble...

Mike's POV zeroes in on a tear rolling down Gillian's cheek. He hears her thoughts.

THOUGHTS OF GILLIAN
..tortured and killed. No one will ever know I lived..

Mike blinks. And casually steps off the roof. He sails seamlessly down into the backyard as if hopping off a barber chair. A nearby Dorcas, stunned by the display, drops a cup of tea. Mike's eyes scan to some angrily battling ants at the crash of the cup.

THOUGHTS OF DORCAS
..TOTAL FEAR-TOTAL FEAR-TOTAL..

MIKE
No fear, please. Sorry me.

A giggling Miriam suddenly pops up and pulls out a gun. Mike's POV is filtered into a frightened red color. Miriam fires the gun and a stream of water baptizes Mike's face. The red dissolves in a burst of heavenly white.

Mike's POV swirls across the yard to a surly Duke trimming rosebushes. Mike scopes to Duke's tatoo (a buzzing sound is heard)

THOUGHTS OF DUKE
..back on Mars where he belongs..

Duke's hand slaps up, killing a fly. Mike does a shudder, before glomming his attention to a passing butterfly.

EXT. IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE BACKYARD--DAY

Jubal blusters out of his chaise.

JUBAL
Front!

Jubal gets no reaction. He wearys round a tree to catch sight of Mike, Miriam, and Dorcas playfully chasing the butterfly.

Mike stops and does a POV wave toward a weakly smiling Jubal.

THE THOUGHTS OF JUBAL
..little varmint can probably read minds..

Miriam dives for the butterfly and scrapes the patio. She looks to her bloody knee and laughs. Anne, sauntering from the back door, laughs too. Mike's spooked POV wings from Miriam's laughing to the bloody knee to Anne's laughing.

MIKE
This noise you mouth. Loud-scary-why?

MIRIAM
You mean, laughing? I laugh because something's fun or funny.
(laughing again)
It's funny that you don't know what funny is.

Gillian climbs down from a rooftop ladder.

GILLIAN
They don't have a form of laughter on Mars?

MIKE
No laughter. No funny. I can see happy it makes you all. But still, it freaks me. I try...

Mike rears his head back for a good chuckle, but only a couple vague squeaky sounds come out.

ANNE
Laughter isn't something you can teach, Mike.

JUBAL
But you'll learn. Don't try to grok it, just let it come.

All turn to an approaching Jubal, surprised to hear him letting down his apathy.

JUBAL
You live among us long enough, you'll see how funny we are--and you will laugh.

MIKE
Intrigueresting...

The butterfly has fluttered to a nearby flower. Beaming, Mike reaches toward it. Suddenly, his entire body is wrenched into the air. Mike bucks and shivers, disembodied above the backyard.

EXT. OUTSIDE MARS

The viewer pushes in on Mike's familiar red, home planet.

MIKE

opens his eyes, his pupils are also red and round.

EXT. THE SURFACE OF MARS

A very still, brooding pack of the mammoth Martians all open their eyes--tinged with an Earth-ish blue glow.

IMAGES

fill the screen. Laughing astronauts. Coma victim Mrs. Bankerson lets off a moan. An aerial whoosh down on Jubal's estate. Sec-Gen Douglas holds out the dark contract. Anne, Miriam, and Dorcas splash into the water. The Terrifying Bodyguard dissolves into air.

EXT. THE BACKYARD

Utterly powerless, all watch their brain-drained alien friend painfully vibrate in air.

MORE IMAGES

reverberate. Dryden coldly wipes the dixie cup water from his lips. A crucifix on a hospital wall. Miriam raises the squirt gun. Berquist raises the real gun. The camera device in the hospital hallway. The tear on Gillian's cheek.

THE MAMMOTH MARTIANS

take in the images, also trembling.

EXT. THE BACKYARD--DUSK

Agonizingly spent, Mike's body completely unstiffens, lifelessly thudding to the lawn. All but Jubal rush to him.

JUBAL
Front. Dorcas, for the last ten years I've been a worthless parasite.

DORCAS
(popping back up)
Everybody knows that...

JUBAL
Never mind the flattery. There comes a time in every man's life when he has to stop being sensible--stand up and be counted--strike a blow for liberty--all that good shit. Come on..

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Jubal's study is a disaster area, smothered by junk, laced with crud. Hands yank out a filthy telestereovision set. An odd Faxlike machine is cranked up. Scribbled papers are swooshed away to reveal an elaborate Video-Phone system.

On a terrace just outside the study, under the moonlight, a telescope-antennae-microphone-looking device is contorted into place. Pulling out, the messy study has been transformed into a lean, mean, fact-finding center.

JUBAL
If I'm going to die, I'd like to know why.
(more)

JUBAL (Cont'd)
We know VMS stands for Valentine Michael Smith, but what in the hell does Valentine Michael Smith stand for? Pull out your plugs. Let's grok.

Strapping on an identity belt, Jubal "plugs in" to the stereovision set. His assistants rush into the pristine space to attack the machines with gusto.

INT. MEDIA CENTER (CAXTON'S OFFICE)--NIGHT

As Anxiety Disposal Officers ominously stand vigil, Sec-Gen Douglas thrusts into Caxton's glass cubicle.

DOUGLAS
Caxton--you dumb sonofabitch, you are destabilizing our--

CAXTON
This wouldn't be about Valentine Michael Smith, would it?--watch the grass!

Douglas carefully steps over the grass patch, then steams at himself for taking orders.

DOUGLAS
So that bogus Candy Striper of yours knows what V.M.S. stands for--

CAXTON
Hey, "what's in a name?"

DOUGLAS
More than you know. I could destroy what little's left of the First Amendment by the end of the day. You would take even less time-- so don't get smug with me...where is she?

CAXTON
I'd love to be smug with you, but I don't have enough information to be smug. I haven't heard from Gillian since she told me last night that your TV Martian pal is a phony. She was worried about what you might have planned for the real one.

DOUGLAS
Let me make-believe that's all you really know. Sometime after your chat, she packed "Mike" from Mars into a Cab. Destination Unknown.

CAXTON
So gee, the guy on your televised pow-wows really is a pathetic fraud?
(more)

CAXTON (Cont'd)
What was on the paper you wanted Valentine Michael Smith to sign, without someone from the Fair Witness program in the room, I might add? And..

DOUGLAS
(regaining control)
Stop it, Ben, you know better...I don't enjoy making you taste my muzzle, but this is something real.

CAXTON
(quelled)
I told Boardman not to get involved. Whatever she's doing now--it's not reporting.

DOUGLAS
You better do what you can. Things are about to happen that neither of us will be able to control.

INT. OUTSIDE MIKE'S BEDROOM--DAY

Mike pulls a blanket over an exhausted Gillian, then bumbles into the hallway. He picks at a bowl of pistachios upon a table--expertly unhatching and devouring with growing pleasure.

His leg brushes off a book. In brillant reflex, Mike snatches it in air. A lightning flash of hundreds of pages. With a post-coital smile, Mike drops the book. It is Huckleberry Finn. Wobbling from the input infusion, Mike drifts to an open doorway.

INT. THE ESTATE LIBRARY--DAY

Mike gazes in wonder at a revealed galaxy of books. Mike pulls out one and jolts its contents through his body. He lets the book drop, reaching for another...

INT. JUBAL'S STUDY

Jubal's study hums. Machines of communication spew info, both paper and cyber. Anne rips off and reads out a communique.

ANNE
So it turns out this Berquist was last exec of the WF to be with Mike. And now he's missing..

Miriam freezes an image of the Sec-Gen and the Fake Mike before a cheering crowd. She points to a man behind Douglas, wearing a red robe and a strange pair of Camera Lens Goggles.

MIRIAM
James Cavendish, best Fair Witness in the business. If they got him fooled, this is one tight cover-up.

Clutching the antennae device, Dorcas teeters in from the terrace, his/her eyes in a zombie bulge.

JUBAL
Dorcas...how's the Neo-NASA Martian Data pipeline?

DORCAS
(dazed)
Reproduction is more science than sexuality. They're big on teleportation. They don't die. I mean, they die, but it is only when they want to. No natural death...

JUBAL
All death is suicide?

DORCAS
You're crude. Martians live until the precise moment they feel their death has meaning-- which might not be for hundreds of years. Did I mention they eat each other after death-- there's a food shortage-it's actually a neat ritual-I took notes..

JUBAL
Dorcas. Think we left you out in the stars too long...

Gillian stands at the doorway, marveling at the energized Jubal.

GILLIAN
Why Jubal Harshaw, you old skindog...you've been...

JUBAL
Hush. I realize I have to take action, and, being philosophically convinced all action is futile, the prospect pisses me off...

A loud booping noise cuts in. The earlier-seen Dr. Nelson pops upon the video-phone.

DR. NELSON (SCREEN)
Jubal Harshaw, when I got the message you buzzed, I almost passed out, you grouchy old grouch.

JUBAL
Ah Doc, life was simpler when we were kids. Sega, riots, Nirvana, bad education; the World Federation was a wrestling organization. Hear you've been traveling abroad...

DR. NELSON (ON SCREEN)
Yeah. The crew liked to call me the only living fossil on Mars.

JUBAL
Touching. I was just discussing the matter with my new buddy, Valentine Michael Smith..

DR. NELSON (ON SCREEN)
Oh Harshaw--you picked the wrong issue to come out of the cave for. Exec Dryden has the power to..

JUBAL
I'm in a position to help Mike, but I need facts...

DR. NELSON (ON SCREEN)
Well, if you know VMS stands for Valentine Michael Smith, then you obviously know who his parents are. From there you can figure out...

Anxiety Disposal soldiers can be seen meandering in the background.

NELSON
Jubal, it's been real...

Nelson reaches out. The screen goes blank. Jubal blusters out of the room. Gillian follows.

HALLWAY/STAIRCASE

Gillian catches up with Jubal ranting up his staircase.

GILLIAN
Parents...talk to me, Harshaw.

JUBAL
Mary Valentine was married to a Dr. Randolph Smith...

GILLIAN
Mary Valentine--she's a scientist, right?

JUBAL
(sarcastic)
History major?....Mary Valentine is <u>the</u> scientist. She invented the Valentine Drive and nine other patents that completely revolutionized space travel. Feels right that she should be involved in the mess that is Mike.

GILLIAN
How do we get a hold of her?

JUBAL
How do we--you are young. She and her husband died in a plane crash in South America--almost 35 years ago.

GILLIAN
That's around the time Mike must have been born. Ignoring the whole "how did their son get up on Mars" question for a moment, it doesn't make sense that...

JUBAL
Sense is a funny thing...

A thudding noise comes from a room at the top of the stairs.

INT. THE LIBRARY--NIGHT

Seduced and abandoned, books are splashed everywhere. Their victimizer, Valentine M. Smith, is on the carpet, casually mind-melding another. Chilled, Jubal and Gillian weave the minefield.

MIKE
Hi.

GILLIAN AND JUBAL
Hi.

Mike pogos, ripping headphones he's wearing out of a stereo filling the room with the soft sounds of a sultry swing/torch ballad. He kicks up a dictionary. He's been busy.

MIKE
Books! So wonderful and groovy and I'm serious. Dictionary--how I cherish. It has from A to Y and it also has Z as well. Words explaining words that explain words! Why astronauts not give me this!-- instead they show stupid pictures and say "This is banana" as if I'm unbrained.

Mike grandly yanks another book from the shelf. MOBY DICK. He gets his jolt, then, as if on acid, lets the book drop.

MIKE
Genuinely exciting fishing tale! More books please!

JUBAL
Education is not the indiscriminate sucking of input!

MIKE
(trembling)
You are angry-furious-enraged-mad. Shall I self-destruct me?

GILLIAN
Mike, wait...Jubal is just a little..confused. I mean, have you really read all these...

JUBAL
(holding a Lincoln book)
Question. The last 39 syllables of Lincoln's Gettysburg speech..

MIKE
"--that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom-- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth."

JUBAL
Question. Do you have any idea what you just said?

MIKE
(beaming)
Almost none! On Taagv, or as you like to say for some reason, "Mars," we have Knowledge that is to be known. Mind to mind, we pass The Knowledge. But you, these books-and-assorted-magazines-and-periodicals-- some knowledge, no knowledge, strange knowledge--a mess. I like. If this is your paper, I wait hardly to go outside and touch your Life-reality. I read and I read and I grok that I have much to grok.

With a weary laugh, Jubal takes one of the books still on the shelf and flips it to Mike.

JUBAL
Well then...Sorry to interrupt.

Jubal escorts Gillian out. Mike looks down to the new book in his hand. It is the Bible. More than ever, he begins to quiver..

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LIBRARY--DAY

Jubal and Gillian again hit the grand staircase.

JUBAL
You know, I haven't had this much fun since I lost my virginity at Woodstock.

GILLIAN
Which Woodstock?

JUBAL
Two. Nine Inch Nails was just coming on and I was in the mud with this girl named Emily...

GILLIAN
Woodstock 2. That's a lot of Woodstocks ago.

JUBAL
Thanks. Oh, do you know anything about Karl Berquist--Sector Germany exec on the WF. Seems since Mike's escape, he's practically disappeared off the face of the earth.

GILLIAN
I think you better sit down.

JUBAL
(still standing)
I am sitting down.

GILLIAN
Berquist....he...he disappeared off the face of the earth...

JUBAL
That's what I said...

EXT. BY THE POOL AREA

After a deadpan pause, Jubal growls into the backyard.

GILLIAN
You don't believe me...

JUBAL
What's not to believe? Mike got his diploma on another planet. I expect the unexpected-- disappointed in anything less.

Jubal helps Anne out of the pool.

JUBAL
Put on your Fair Witness robe and meet us in the Study.

GILLIAN
Anne, you're a Fair Witness..?

JUBAL
And a great one. She wouldn't testify that the sun had risen if the day was cloudy.

ANNE
(smiling)
How could I? Somebody might be supplying artificial light from above the cloud layer.

JUBAL
Somebody go get the Alien.

INT. HANGAR--DAY

A piece of paper familiarly sizzles into liquid. Standing above, in a drafty hangar, are Dryden and an upleasantly commanding Australian Military Leader, CAPTAIN KEARNEY.

KEARNEY
Interesting.

DRYDEN
I thought it was important for you to see the importance of VMS to all of us.

KEARNEY
We've narrowed targets--upstate New York is looking promising...

A fierce group of Anxiety Disposal Soldiers load chilling state-of-the-art weaponery into two large ATTACK CRUISERS.

DRYDEN
We've finally created a world without War, but we'll never have one without...situations.

KEARNEY
Gotta be honest, mate, it's been awful dull monitoring Sat-systems...looking forward to some real action.

DRYDEN
Don't be too enthusiastic. I'd prefer Mr. Smith alive. However, when it comes to Gillian Boardman and whatever terrorist sect she's hooking up with, feel free to use your worst judgement.

INT. THE LIBRARY--DAY

Mike sits stiffly in civillian clothing, intently watching the tube, specifically the horrifying image of the Three Fosterites blowing themselves up.

A bald man in the Fosterite Uniform supersedes on screen. He is BISHOP DIGBY. He stands before an ornament that is the blending of a crucifix and an "F."

BISHOP DIGBY (SCREEN)
Powerful stuff, huh? We officially do not condone what Mark, Bob, and Kelly did the other afternoon--but they followed their hearts and made a statement against sin. You have to admire that. As Reverend Foster used to spout, "Life is like a telethon with only three people working the phones..."

Bishop Digby strolls out before a chorus of Happy followers.

BISHOP DIGBY (SCREEN)
This is Bishop Digby reminding you that if you're in the sector, drop into our main church to see if you...

JUBAL
A damn Fosterite Info-mercial. Front!

DORCAS
Got it.

Dorcas slaps off the TSV as the rest of the Housemates enter--including Anne, wearing a long red Fair Witness gown and a pair of the strange goggles.

MIKE
But who are these Fosterites? Their joyous acceptance of self-destruction nostlagias Martian willingness to un-life in order to, how you say, "prove a point."

DORCAS
A bunch of conservative morality mongers and liberal PC fascists went off the ends of their respective spectrums and realized they had a lot of superiority in common. Hence forming a very twisted religion.

MIKE
Ah, Religion-- "a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe." "Christianity" "Islam" "Judaism" More explain.

JUBAL
Uh, do we have to talk about this now....How many hands do I have?

MIKE
Two hands. I see two hands.

JUBAL
Suppose you said that I had seven hands?

MIKE
I do not grok that I could say that.

JUBAL
Mike, each religion claims to be truth. Yet their answers to the same question are as different as two hands and seven hands. The Fosterites say one thing, the Catholics say another, the Moslems say still another...

MIKE
All speak rightly? I do not grok it.

JUBAL
Nor do I. Can we talk about this later--really later. Hey, things calm down and we'll let you see a Fosterite service. Promise. Now Mike, you've been a remarkable student. Come closer, we want to ask...

Mike rises up and steps forward, only to crumple savagely to the ground. His shoelaces are tied together.

MIRIAM
Someone forgot to teach the remarkable student a biggie.

MIKE
There are two ways to tie shoelaces. One is good for walking. One is good for lying down.

Dorcas and Miriam lift Mike up onto a nearby couch.

GILLIAN
Now Mike, do you remember, when we met, in the hospital?

MIKE
Yes, yes, it was a great happiness.

GILLIAN
It sure was. But do you remember a little later--the two men in the hallway. The ones with the guns.

MIKE
Dictionary says a gun is...

Blanching, Mike starts to curl up. Gillian shakes him to stop. Robed Anne calmly watches it all, goggles pulled over head.

GILLIAN
Mike, no! When they pointed the guns...You did something...and they were gone.

MIKE
Something is there, in front of me. It is wrong thing and it must not be there. It must go. So I reach out and...It is such a simple thing. Tying shoelaces is much more hard.

Jubal raises up a Music Box.

JUBAL
Can you make this go away?

MIKE
This is a wrong thing and it must not be here?

JUBAL
Well, assume that it is.

MIKE
But--Jubal, I must know. I do not grok box exists wrongly.

Jubal good-naturedly throws the box at Gillian. It never makes it there.

GILLIAN
Missed me....Okay, where did..

ANNE
He did it. The box did not simply vanish. It appeared to shrink, as if disappearing into the far distance. We can study the footage later.

Mike is again a trembling mess. Gillian rushes to comfort.

GILLIAN
It's okay, Mike. It's okay...this hypothetical play-violence is all very un-Martian.

MIKE
I'm sorry for wasting so much food.

JUBAL
Food? What food?

DORCAS
He's talking about Berquist and the bodyguard. Need I remind you of the Martian notion of food?

JUBAL
You need not...

MIKE
When you destruct, my brother Jubal, I hope to be allowed to eat of you myself, praising and cherishing you with every bite until I grok you in fullness. And if I should go before you, I hope that you will find me worthy of grokking. Sharing me with Gillian.

JUBAL
(polite nausea)
Uh, sounds like a party...I've got an idea. Duke, come with me.

INT. THE STAIRCASE--NIGHT

Scribbling on a piece of paper, Jubal charges up the staircase. Duke lumbers behind.

JUBAL
Damn vidphone is on the fritz again. I tell you, all technology above a knife and fork...

DUKE
So boss, when we getting rid of that ghoul?

JUBAL
"Ghoul?" Oh, you big, dumb provincal lout. Don't you know that if you had been born on Mars and had been brought up by Martians, you'd be eating barbecued ribs...and intestines.

INT. THE STUDY--DAY

Duke dutifully goes to work on the phone while Jubal rages about.

DUKE
I ain't gonna get into some big conversation about Instinct and Taboos. This cannibalism stuff makes me want to puke. But what the hey, Mike's just a savage. He don't know no better.

JUBAL
Mike is not a savage, but maybe we are.

EXT. MARS SURFACE

As Jubal goes into a reverie, the viewer sees a group of mammoth Martians encircle a dead friend, along with MIKE AS A BOY.

JUBAL (V.O.)
The dining custom is highly formalized. A Martian is never slaughtered against his will. Instead, a Martian dies when he decides to die, having discussed it with his friends and elders.

INT. JUBAL'S STUDY--DUSK

Jubal quickly turns to Duke.

JUBAL
Wait a sixty....you have become a water brother of Mike's haven't you?

DUKE
More nonsense if you ask me...

JUBAL
It is not nonsense and nobody asked you. If you're not a water brother, then you're not Mike's friend. If you're not Mike's friend...How'd you like to find out where that music box went...

DUKE
Yeah, well...The phone's ready.

A weirded-out Duke moseys out. Anne, out of her robe, and Miriam, saunter in.

ANNE
What's with Duke?

JUBAL
He's thinking. A strange and new activity. We've got to move on to Action. We can use our advantages.

MIRIAM
We have advantages?

JUBAL
We know something the WF doesn't. The whereabouts of Federation Exec Karl Berquist...

ANNE
Or lack thereof.

JUBAL
(to video-phone)
World Federation Capitol building..

A cheerful female INDIAN RECEPTIONIST appears on screen.

INDIAN RECEPTIONIST (SCREEN)
Greetings and salutations. Welcome to the World Federation.

JUBAL
Secretary-General Joseph Douglas, please...

INDIAN RECEPTIONIST (SCREEN)
(slight-giggle)
We live in a splendid Epoch where every single person is globally united--But the Secretary General is a busy-bee..

JUBAL
Fine. I'll just talk to Karl. Karl Berquist.

INDIAN RECEPTIONIST (SCREEN)
(face falling)
Please limbo...

A stylized symbol of a smiling globe thuds upon the screen with some swing music. Soon, a grinning WHITE AMERICAN MALE STAFFER appears upon the screen.

HOTSHOT STAFFER (SCREEN)
So this is Jubal Harshaw of 15610...

JUBAL
Thanks. I know my own address and my favorite color is purple. Now that you have shown off your Tracing Toys...Can I speak with Mr. Berquist?

HOTSHOT STAFFER (SCREEN)
Love to help, but the hoot is Karl left for vacation yesterday--taking the family down to Atlanta to see the Eiffel Tower, to celebrate Landmark Exchange month...

JUBAL
The real hoot is you're lying. I talked with him this morning...

HOTSHOT STAFFER (SCREEN)
You...you talked to Berquist...please limbo...

The Globe symbol flashes on again. Jubal exchanges grins with Anne and Dorcas as the fierce, earlier-seen Captain Kearney, in full military gear, comes on the screen.

KEARNEY (SCREEN)
What be your interest in Karl Berquist?

JUBAL
I want to speak with him. By your uniform I can tell...

KEARNEY (SCREEN)
Shut up and answer my questions...I am Captain Kearney of the Anxiety Disposal Force...

JUBAL
How can I be sure?

The flustered Captain holds an ID card up to his monitor.

JUBAL
(squinter)
Closer...closer...I can't...

KEARNEY (SCREEN)
Limbo!

The screen yet again gets slapped with the WF symbol as Jubal booms a laugh. His glee ends as Exec Dryden smoothly appears.

DRYDEN (SCREEN)
Jubal Harshaw...Haven't heard that name in a while...I'm Executive Dryden.

JUBAL
You're the scary, all-knowing one, right?
(more)

JUBAL (Cont'd)
Listen, I'm sure you have wonderful reasons for perpetuating a mind-boggling charade on the Earth public, no doubt based on greed and fear. Point blank. I have Mike. So what do you say, you drop the government spook act and I'll drop the crusty rebel act? Let's just throw everything out in the open. You tell us what you know. We tell you what we know. What do you say?

DRYDEN
I say...No.

The connection chillingly cuts off with an old-fashioned dial tone.

JUBAL
That could have gone..better.

INT. THE LIBRARY--NIGHT

Gillian wearily begins putting the discarded books back up on the shelves. Swing still sirens from the stereo.

MIKE
But they joyously off themselves to sanctify their love...

GILLIAN
Trust me, Romeo and Juliet does not have a happy ending...

MIKE
I love you, Gillian.

Touched, Gillian drops a book and smiles, until...

MIKE
I love Jubal. I love Anne, Miriam and Dorcas. I almost love Duke.

GILLIAN
That's..nice. If you love Jubal so much, you might want to help clean up your mess..

MIKE
Oh. You speak rightly.

Suddenly, every single book on the ground whooshes up into a snug place in the bookshelves. As a little touch of order, two books ease into the air and switch positions back into the bookcase. Gillian laughingly teeters in shock, curling forward around Mike, lulling him into the music's rhythm.

MIKE
What's funny?

GILLIAN
Nothing...What do you think of the music?

MIKE
I do not know what I think of the music.

GILLIAN
The Minister of Culture has declared it the Year of Swing. You're lucky. Last year it was something called "Polka."

MIKE
We have no music on Mars. No telestereovision, no fiction, no sports, no rollercoasters--Why do you even have these things? Why do you have religion...

Gillian pulls Mike into more of a full-fledged dance. Mike catches on quick.

GILLIAN
Sh-h-h...Something I like about my planet is that we Earthlings know there are times when it's better to just dance.
(a pause)
Not that I don't have questions of my own. Like about yesterday in the backyard. One minute you're chasing butterflies, the next minute you're floating...in pain.

MIKE
It is the call of the Elders. For their--I believe the cool word is "mission." I get Information. They take information...

GILLIAN
What information?

MIKE
All information. Warm weather. Hospital Food. The Catcher in the Rye. Power steering. Lesbian poetry. War. Yogurt. Your laugh. Your tears. The crucifixion. White rabbits. Whenever Elders want, they take my mind for mission. When your astronauts come, I scare. Elders unscare me. To go with astronauts. For mission. Their mission is not my mission.

GILLIAN
Really--what's <u>your</u> mission?

MIKE
For years and years, my name is SIMPLE-ODD-SOUND. Now suddenly of a sudden, tis "Mike." You say "Who is Valentine Michael Smith?" I say same thing. I am both and neither martian and human. Martians don't have parents. I do.

GILLIAN
Mary Valentine and Dr. Randolph Smith.

A FLASH OF A CHURCH

With a flash, Mike and the viewer see the image of a commanding dark-maned MARY VALENTINE kissing her mild, bespectacled husband DR. SMITH on their wedding day.

BACK TO THE LIBRARY

Mike collapses to the ground, clutching his cranium. Gillian races down to comfort him. Unnoticed, Jubal is revealed to be standing in the doorway, watching the couple on the carpet.

MIKE
Always since always, the Elders agony me when I think about these Origin things. They don't want me to know until they want me to know. I try to brain information from your Leaders at hospital, but Hurt comes.

GILLIAN
Brain the information?

MIKE
Yes, I read minds. It's so easy, it's not even hard. Like putting the books back.

GILLIAN
You want to learn about your parents? You don't need telepathy and you don't need your Elders. You got me and I'm good. Made some calls already. Your parents are buried on the other side of the country; in the place called Sub-Sector California. Let's not think about it...Let's just go..

MIKE
(writhing)
I grok this...I grok this to be bueno idea. To touch monument to parents death would unleash feelings, vibes, and truth that even Elders could not block. I want more than find about parents, I want to find myself.

GILLIAN
You're like most human beings in their thirties, after all.

MIKE
Is that a joke?

GILLIAN
Yeah. It's also the truth.

JUBAL
The best jokes are. Quite a conversation--hate to end it. But I've been bad...

GILLIAN
Oh man, what did you do...?

Before Jubal can spill the beans, Miriam bounces in.

MIRIAM
Um. "We've got company."

JUBAL
Mike, get in the pool...

EXT. BEFORE JUBAL'S ESTATE--NIGHT

Jubal and the gang drift out front to gawk up at the earlier-seen military attack cruisers.

EXT. POOLSIDE--NIGHT

Mike dives into the pool with his clothes on.

EXT. BEFORE JUBAL'S ESTATE--NIGHT

One Cruiser putters above, flashing its many floodlights in many directions, while the other malevolently screeches down in a firm landing and immediately empties out a frighteningly intense crew, led by a strutting forward Captain Kearney.

KEARNEY
Jubal Harshaw, I have a warrant for..

JUBAL
How much effort could it be to land on the grass and not on one of the few non-automated rosebushes in the entire sector!

KEARNEY
We have the right to search for code name V.M-- you bloody know who were looking for. Where is he?

JUBAL
So it's you...the idiot-Cossack on the phone...pretty quick house call...

KEARNEY
Our Federation Cruisers have multi-Mach capability that allows us...

JUBAL
Gosh, you're kidding--You know, I'd love to gab all night but you're a cheap Nazi goon. Now get your go-cart off my flower bed...

KEARNEY
Let me tell you something; you're gonna get fucked. The little reporter sheila behind you-- she's gonna get fucked too.

JUBAL
Seems like we're all in for quite an evening....but I protest such pornographic language...

KEARNEY
(pulling on black gloves)
Cry all you want. We're all alone...

INT. THE POOL

Mike sits in comfortable contemplation at the bottom of the pool. His eyes suddenly open. The viewer's viewpoint mystically floats up out of the water and into the air.

EXT. JUBAL'S ESTATE

Mike's Astral P.O.V. silently arcs away from the pool and over Jubal's house.

The viewer's viewpoint eerily hovers over the Tableau of Confrontation on the front lawn. Jubal and Captain Kearney continue to trade shouts and shoves, but no voices are heard. The entire scene unfolds in total silence. Mike's astral POV continues to weave around, occasionally stopping to focus upon strapped-on artillery.

INT. THE POOL

Mike begins to vibrate in the pool.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN--NIGHT

Still in silence, the viewer's viewpoint watches Jubal push away from Kearney, who rips out a gun, causing everyone else to unleash their weaponry.

INT. THE POOL

Mike's eyes gently tint blue.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN--NIGHT

Angrily shouting in silence, Kearney points his gun. He disappears. Two soldiers jostling on each side of Gillian also suddenly disappear, causing her to stumble to her knees.

Mike and the viewer's mystic viewpoint pulls up for a wide view of the panicky soldiers squealing in confusion. They all disappear.

Two More Soldiers charge out from the Cruiser with state-of-the-art bazookas. They disappear. The entire Cruiser disappears. A sudden Tilt-up reveals the Other Cruiser coming in for a landing. It disappears.

Jubal, Gillian, Anne, Dorcas, Miriam, and Duke shiver and crumble in deadpan shock. Miriam suddenly launches forcefully silent hysterics.

EXT. POOLSIDE--NIGHT

Breaking the silence, Mike splashes out from the pool. Gillian comes running around the house and seeing Mike, she stops in her tracks.

INT. INSIDE THE HOUSE--NIGHT

Jubal blusters up the stairs with Dorcas scurrying shotgun.

JUBAL
About a week from now, we'll have Anne tell us what we just saw. But right now, we've got work to do. Make a note to dock Miriam's pay for hysterics.

DORCAS
Jubal! I would have had hysterics myself if Miriam hadn't beat me to it.

JUBAL
All right, put Miriam down for a bonus. Put all of you down for a bonus. Me, especially. I used to be so content, just kicking back by the pool, dictating commercial crapola...

DORCAS
You lie...

JUBAL
What if I do. Boardman, get up here!

EXT. POOLSIDE--NIGHT

Gillian jolts at the sound of her name breaking eerie eye contact with Mike. She rushes into the house. Mike turns behind him. An enlightened Duke is nervously holding up a glass of water.

DUKE
Hey brother..how's about sharing a nice, cool refreshment?

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Gillian comes in on Jubal and Miriam cranking up the vidphone.

JUBAL
Those men came to kill us. And that shit just ain't cute. A second team will be here soon...Call your boss. Ben Caxton at Media.

GILLIAN
You don't understand--all calls to Ben are on Intercept.

JUBAL
You don't understand--we want to be intercepted. There comes a time when you want basically everyone to know basically everything. Those who loveth evil, hateth the light. So I say let there be light..I have a plan.

GILLIAN
Is it as good as the one that led two Attack Cruisers straight to the house?

JUBAL
Even better...

They both laugh. Gillian picks up a phone...

EXT. LOOKING INT. THE OFFICES OF MEDIA

The viewer's viewpoint hovers outside Media's windows to see cub reporter Stanley scamper through the DARK OFFICES, up to the head-setted Ben Caxton, who is lit by a lone beam.

INT. MEDIA HEADQUARTES--NIGHT

The viewer moves inside, to the middle of their conversation.

STANLEY
I told you, Gillian knew to call me at the bar. She always said if there was still such a thing as alcohol, I'd be an alcoholic...

CAXTON
So Boardman really thinks that if I contact Sec-Gen Douglas and tell him I know where Mike is..
(a smile)
I think I see where this is going...

INT. THE HARSHAW HOUSE--NIGHT

Jubal, Gillian, Anne, Dorcas, and a going-with-the-flow Mike rush down the Estate's big staircase and through the house.

ANNE
Isn't one of us supposed to say 'this won't work in a million years.'?

JUBAL
Gillian, once you and Mike get on the road, don't stop for anything. You have to be at the booth at the exact sec we transfer.

MIKE
If I knew what was happening, I'd be very probably scared.

Jubal slaps a piece of paper in his hand.

JUBAL
Since it takes you two seconds to memorize Ulysses, you shouldn't have trouble with this. It's for later.

DORCAS
Why does the WF have to be so rude? Guns are rude.

GILLIAN
I keep coming back to something Douglas said. About Mike being the key to "fortunes known and unknown..."

JUBAL
Fortunes known. I have a thought. Mary Valentine and a team that included her husband started the Rodan corportation, that's where all those unprecedented space inventions were first developed.

Mike stops, reverberating with another flash.

INT. FLASHBACK PRESS CONFERENCE

Mary Valentine, Dr. Smith, and their team are working together over a myriad of charts, documents, blueprints...and a map of Mars.

INT. THE HOUSE

Mike shakes off this flashing flashback and catches up.

ANNE
Corporation like that must be worth billions of credits...

JUBAL
Conservatively. Grok this, the other corporation heads died in the same plane crash as Valentine and Smith. Under some funky legal thing, since there were no heirs, control of the corporation went to the World Federation.

GILLIAN
Mike's a missing heir. The corporation is his. All that fundage coming out of Federation banks and into Mike's shoebox...my God.

DORCAS
They were trying to get him to sign it all away...

JUBAL
If it was just money, the WF would send in an army of lawyers; instead they sent an army of Army.

GILLIAN
Guess that has to do with the "fortunes unknown" part of the equation...So how do Mike and I get to this phone booth?

INT. GARAGE--NIGHT

Duke rips a sheet off, revealing a choice '67 Mustang. Anne and Dorcas put supplies in the back.

DUKE
So Gillian, ever see a real car?

GILLIAN
Sure, my stepfather kept one in the barn.

DUKE
Ever driven stick?

GILLIAN
Come again?

JUBAL
(to Mike)
Mike, we'll either pull this one off or we won't. I'm not great with goodbyes. Not much on Hello-s, for that matter. Happy trails, Valentine.

Jubal holds out his hand. Moved beyond words, terrified beyond belief, Mike reaches out, too. The tender moment is ruined as the handshaken Jubal squeals loud and youthfully.

MIKE
Sorry me, did not want to be weak fish.

JUBAL
So sweet and innocent--How many people did you kill tonight?

Miriam drys her tears to scurry up to Mike and present him with a delightfully old fashioned yellow raincoat.

MIRIAM
Mike, this is a raincoat. For rain. I don't want you to get sniffles.

DORCAS
Sniffles? Mike has spent most of his life running around in minus-160 degree weather. Without a sweater. He doesn't need..

MIKE
(putting it on)
I wear not because of rain or sleet, but because post-traumatic Miriam is emotionally fragile right now and needs unquestioning acceptance.

Laughing, Miriam gives Mike a sweet kiss. Mike, with solemn power, keeps up his part. Miriam breaks off in a near-faint.

MIRIAM
Whew...that was a...kiss.

MIKE
Kissing. It is a goodness.

JUBAL
Beats the shit out of card games. Front! Anne-a full report.

ANNE
You know how to drain the fun factor from anything..

Anne lightly latches to Mike for a kiss. Mike is willing to go until sunrise. Anne breaks with an amused gasp.

JUBAL
What's he got that I don't, not that you know what I ever had.

ANNE
I'm sure you were a stud, but parts of men's minds are always somewhere else--bills that need paying..problems at work..girl they saw on a billboard...When Mike kisses you he isn't doing anything else. You're the whole universe for that moment...and the moment is eternal.

DUKE
Sheesh, you grokked all that on one smooch....what about you, Journalist?

GILLIAN
A..a kiss should be private and special...

MIKE
How could it be anything else?

JUBAL
Oh christ, the timetable! Enough with the slobbering, we're in the middle of an interplanetary incident!

Gillian uses Jubal's panic to elude Mike's kiss and rev the car.

JUBAL
Remember Gillian, don't let Mike speak over five minutes, then get your asses out on the road. And never look back.

GILLIAN
Happy trails.

Surprisingly expertly, Gillian screech reverses the car out of the garage. The Harshaw household stares to the empty space with brief sadness...before all bolting inside.

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Shirt unbuttoned, Secretary General Douglas is splayed out on a bedroom chair, wearing virtual headgear.

DOUGLAS
Oh yeah, that's it, this is the way you like it don't you...Mama's not coming home tonight...

A screen on the bedroom flashes bright red and an EARNEST UNDERLING comes on. Douglas wrestles off his VR gear in a quake of panic.

EARNEST UNDERLING
Sir, Ben Caxton snippets of supposed news of the Man from Mars. Shall I temporarily remove Media Intercept...?

DOUGLAS
Uh, fine, fine...

INT. MEDIA HEADQUARTERS--NIGHT

All lights and machines of Media triumphantly flash on around a rising-from-his-chair Ben Caxton. He hand-signals Stanley and Female Editor Sheila. Sheila tugs on a headset and begins feverish key-pounding. Stanley slides underneath a computer system to play with some tangled wires.

Caxton slaps a button. A flustered Douglas, tucking in his shirt, comes upon the screen.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
All right, Caxton, you asstrohole, it's about time. You got the goodies on VMS, spill...

CAXTON
Can't I call to just Say Hello? Does there always have to be a reason?

Caxton presses a 'CONF.' button on a little red box. Suddenly, the video-phone screens split into three triangles. One has Ben in his office, one has Douglas in his bedroom, and the other has Jubal in his study, with Fair Witness Anne behind him.

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD

The Mustang rockets over a dirt road.

INT. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Douglas lunges from his bedside chair in outrage to rant up at the three-way sight upon his screen.

DOUGLAS
What is this, Caxton?

CAXTON (SCREEN)
It's a conference call.

DOUGLAS
I know what a god damn conference call is...what's with the Old guy and his little Fair Witness?

INT. THE STUDY

Jubal continues to speak before the three way image. Dorcas and Miriam watch from the side of the video-phone.

JUBAL
Name's Jubal Harshaw and I am acting for Valentine Michael Smith.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Jubal Harshaw? The Jubal Harshaw? I thought you were retired or at least dead.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE--NIGHT

Caxton gets a playful salute from Female editor Sheila and exchanges nods with a bobbing-up-from-some-wires Stanley.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Don't want to interrupt, but in four minutes a conversation between you and VMS will be uplinked to World-wide Satellite 17, causing it to-- much like your bullshit Public Addresses--to come on every TSV set in the entire world...Oh, and don't try Re-Intercept. We're scrambled.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
I'm supposed to be the most powerful person in the world..I don't need this shit!

EXT. OUTSIDE PHONE BOOTH

The Mustang does a spinning stop in the gravel before a dilapitated video-phone. Mike and Gillian bound out.

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Douglas continues to twist in the wind.

DOUGLAS
Fuck you all! I'm hanging up!

CAXTON (SCREEN)
And give Harshaw unadulterated airwave access-- you're not stupid.

JUBAL (SCREEN)
He's afraid. You're afraid.

INT. JUBAL'S FRONT LAWN

Another Cruiser swooshes upon the grass of Harshaw's estate. Soldiers pile out..

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Jubal gets serious.

JUBAL
You're afraid I'm going to ask about Mike's origin, about his power over you-- You're afraid I'm going to ask you to tell the truth. Maybe later. Tonight, I just want to save a friend's life.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Three minutes until talktime.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
You people don't realize how high the stakes are here! And I'll have you know I would never do anything to endanger lives.

A YOUNG GUN-TOTING MAJOR suddenly bashes through the Study door with a small squadron of men.

JUBAL
Your Boss wants to talk to you.

MAJOR
Very funny. You're coming with me..

Jubal pulls the Major before the screen with him.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Oh my Fuck...who are you? What are you doing?

MAJOR
A squad was sent here to make arrests. They didn't report in so we came to render assistance..

JUBAL
I've yet to see a warrant.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Oh. Major, show him your search warrant.

MAJOR
Uh, sir, the officer ahead of me had the warrants. Captain Kearney. The one who's missing.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
You broke into a citizen's home without a warrant!

JUBAL
(laying it on thick)
In all my life, I've never...

MAJOR
But sir, there was a warrant! I saw it. It's just that Kearney took it....

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Two minutes to air.

Jubal pushes the soldier out of the way.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Please Harshaw, be reasonable...

JUBAL
That's exactly what I can't be, sir. The only way my friend is going to gain any real freedom is in the eyes of everyone in every igloo and condo top and bottom of the equator. And pal, if you don't cooperate, this could be the worst public relations disaster since the Detroit Olympics and the day they put the Berlin Wall back up.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
One minute....

INT. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Douglas frantically seethes around the room.

DOUGLAS
It's not like you can look this one up in the handbook..Damn alien..Public interaction without proper warning--This is an outrage!

INT./EXT. THE PHONE BOOTH

Gillian rams a steel rod into the vid-phone's orifice and jiggles. The phone comes to life. She pops up and hand-teases Mike's hair. He gives another glance to Jubal's paper.

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Dorcas tries to primp up Jubal. He glares her back.

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
God, how I despise you grouchy old Generation X types! You may have heard that the North Pole is a penal colony now...Well, pack some long underwear, Santa Claus, you're...

JUBAL
Douglas, just go with the flow...Mike will be doing most of the talking.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
(into headset)
Five, four, three, two...Go to Mike.

EXT. EARTH

The earlier-seen satellite cuts in front of the glorious Earth. The familiar light on the satellite comes on and starts blinking.

EXT. THE STREET--NIGHT

The line of screens on the earlier-seen DC street comes to life with the image of Mike, lovable in his yellow raincoat. Passers-by stop passing and start watching.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Hello everybody on the planet.

EXT. THE STADIUM--NIGHT

Again, in the same stadium seen before, playing the same futuristic sport, players (as well as their spectators) look up to the humungous screen. One player halting his athletic movements has a still-in-play ball comically thwack against his head.

MIKE (SCREEN)
My name's Valentine Michael Smith, but my new friends call me Mike.

EXT./INT. NORWAY CABIN--DAY

In through the frozen window of a cabin, a RURAL NORWEGIAN FAMILY are huddled around their incongruous screen.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I am from Mars. I must tell you that the man pretending to be me on the TSV..

INT. A BOSTON BAR--NIGHT

A bar full of Regular Joes and a Robo-Bartender transfix themselves up to a screen.

MIKE
...was a decoy provided by the gracious and compassionate executives of the World Federation for my own safety and security. Isn't that correct, Secretary General Joseph Douglas..?

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE--NIGHT

Ben Caxton hoots as the Sec-Gen's image takes over on screen.

CAXTON
(to head-set)
Go to Douglas...

DOUGLAS (SCREEN)
Uh, that's right, Mike, that's right...A decoy. For your own safety.

CAXTON
Back to Mike...

EXT. SOUTH OF FRANCE BEACH--DAY

European Beachgoers crowd before a screen set up in the sand.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I mean, it's not like I was trapped in a hospital room, forced to sign a paper that would make me a guinea pig of the state...

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

A river of blood-red wine cascades across the perfect white WF conference table. Seething with anger all the more spooky because it is implosive, Dryden futilely pushes the giant unmoving conference table like a tragic mythological figure.

MIKE (SCREEN)
The WF thought it would be better if I went out and discovered the world in my own way and at my own pace. Thanks for the vote of confidence, Joe!

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Jubal and the gang proudly and nervously watch Mike.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I proudly state I've been under the tutelage of Author-Activist Jubal Harshaw...at his secret private address 15610 Windfield Lane Kensington, PA in the Poconos!

Jubal slaps his palm against his forehead.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE VIDEO-PHONE

Barely breathing outside the video-phone, Gillian sees Mike throw away Jubal's paper and kick into overdrive. She nervously looks to her watch.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I have memorized the dates of your wars and treaties and diseases and cures and celebrity birthdays.

INT. THE MAIN FOSTERITE CHURCH

A congregation of Fosterites, including Bishop Digby, stare to Mike. The Bishop glows with rapt curiosity.

MIKE
It's all extremely intrigueresting, but more I want...I want to live out the words of your dictionary.

INT. DEEP IN AFRICA SCHOOLHOUSE--DAY

A quaint classroom of African children look to a screen.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I want to embrace first hand your complexity and spirituality and inconsistency and stupidity and reality...

INT. MAZE OF CUBICLES--NIGHT

The viewer weaves down a line of cubicles where each person has stopped their employment to imbibe their private screen.

MIKE (SCREENS)
And then there's the water. I always come back to the water. How I want to share it...Live it..

EXT. BIKE-PATH NEXT TO PARADISE--DAY

A PHALANX OF CYCLISTS have parked on the side of the road, overlooking something really beautiful. A FEMALE CYCLIST looks at a screen attached to her bike handle.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I am ready to take my place as Citizen Normal. I am ready to grok your world. I...

The Female Cyclist turns from the screen to a beautiful sunset.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PHONE BOOTH--NIGHT

Gillian gives an alarmed glance to her watch. She lightnings to the phone, below Mike, holding her fist over the steel rod.

GILLIAN
Say Goodnight, Mike...

Gillian brings her fist down.

INT. THE STADIUM

Mike does a last gush from the scoreboard.

MIKE
Goodnight, Mike!

The image cuts off and goes to Caxton.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Hello, I'm Ben Caxton, managing editor of Media. We apologize for the interruption of your lives...

EXT. OUTSIDE A 7-11

An extremely diverse mix of shoppers outside a 7-11 watch Caxton sign off.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
but hoped you enjoyed being a part of history. Sweet dreams.

In the background, the Mustang storms by. Mike is heroically standing in the passenger seat. The viewer's viewpoint watches the Mustang barrel away from the back, seemingly driving up toward a full moon on the horizon.

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD--DAY

The Mustang chugs down a pretty desolate highway.

JUBAL (V.O.)
There comes a time in every man's life when you have to go out and see the world, even if, especially if, it's not your own.

Gillian is fumbling with a dusty map and the stick shift. Oblivious, Mike has eased his head out the window with a dog's glee.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike and Gillian's goal remained bizarre, but precise: Traveling to California to touch the grave of Mike's parents, hoping to unlock a psychic payload of hidden secrets-- secrets still kept from him by the Earth government and his own Martian Elders. They could have just hopped a shuttle, but Mike wanted the scenic route.

EXT. DRIVE THROUGH CITY--NIGHT

Day crashes to night. A saucer-eyed Mike looks out to a bevy of nightlife sights: ANXIETY DISPOSAL OFFICERS drag off a HOMELESS MAN. An OLD WOMAN crys over her DEAD DOG. YOUNG LOVERS stop eating blue carrots to kiss with force--A JEALOUS GIRL cracks the female with a bottle.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Finding about himself was only half of Mike's personal mission. The other half was finding out about everybody else. It was one thing to hang out by the pool at my place. Raw and unrehearsed, a city was something else. Mike was a baby staring up to a mobile on fire. Certain abilities of Martian body control came in handy for..

Mike widens his eyes and his hair turns blonde.

EXT. THE STREET--NIGHT

On the familiar D.C. street, plugging citizens swarm a line of screens projecting highlights of the giddy raincoated VMS.

JUBAL (V.O.)
..as blown away as Mike was about Earth. The vice-versa was even more wicked. The Bulletin Board overflowed with literally universal euphoria...

The image of a A GERMAN STUDENT WEARING A BACKPACK ON HIS FRONT, standing on a daylit campus comes on the screens.

STUDENT (SCREEN)
Hi, my name is Karl, and I'm using my 17 seconds to say, I never lost my innocence because I was never allowed to have it to begin with. Hearing Mike speak, I got a taste.

An OLD AMERICAN INDIAN WOMAN rises from a campfire.

AMERICAN INDIAN WOMAN (SCREEN)
When the world gets me down, I think of the world that Mike's eyes see. And I don't get so down. That's my 17 secs.

EXT. OUTSIDE A STORE--DAY

Post-raid, SHOPPERS plow from a store, clutching yellow raincoats.

JUBAL (V.O.)
In a strange way, he influenced fashion.

INT. BARE MEETING ROOM--DAY

Citizens of every size sit upon a Circle of chairs, all wearing their yellow raincoats. One stands.

JUBAL (V.O.)
In a stranger way, he influenced something deeper. For a people convinced they had tried everything on the spiritual buffet, Mike was deliciously off the menu..

RAINCOATED GROUP MEMBER
So when Mike said "I always come back to the water," it really hit me because I had been running away from nature for so long that..

A NON-SPECIFIC SCREEN

The image of a MEXICAN FARMER pointing one way cuts to a RED-BEARDED MOUNTAIN CLIMBER pointing another.

JUBAL (V.O.)
And of course everyone from Baja to the Himalayas claimed to had seen Mike in person; their lives changed forever..

INT. THE WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The Asian Executive points up to a map on the screen labeled VMS SIGHTINGS, littered with conflicting red dots. Sec-Gen Douglas huffs, turning back on the Bulletin Board.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Absurdly enough, our Satellite 17 show had made the Federation Execs look like benevolent Gods. They were not going to blow the Image boost. At least, for now..

ISRAELI SHEPERD (SCREEN)
...and it only shows you don't have to be born on this planet to be a part of it...

Next up, AN ADORABLE IRISH REDHEAD laces up her skates.

ICE SKATER (SCREEN)
Hi. Siobhan. Ticking off 17 to say--
"Hey, World Federation, way to go."
(more)

ICE SKATER (Cont'd)
Their relaxed hands-off policy toward Mike has been a surprise-total. Major groove tags!

DOUGLAS
Call me insane, but maybe the people of this planet have something to teach us about...

DRYDEN
You're insane.

AFRCIAN FEMALE EXECUTIVE
No, Dryden, true insanity is when a lone executive viciously orders the Anxiety Disposal Force to attack...

DRYDEN
What's your point? It's what I do. Does it trouble anyone that those first A.D. squads, to say nothing of Berquist, still have not reported in?

DOUGLAS
Those pathetic failures are too scared to face me.

RUSSIAN EXEC
All I know is anybody who has the power to take this much away from us is someone I still consider dangerous...

FRENCH EXECUTIVE HENRI
Is this all World Federation is abowt--getting together to make as many money-credits we can? Terrible.

DOUGLAS
Terrible is right. I'm reminded of what that Eskimo family said during their 17 seconds...

DRYDEN
Stop...We must find the Alien. Do I really have to remind you fools of the importance of "Larkin?"

At the mention of "Larkin," everyone goes dead.

INT. JUBAL'S STUDY--DAY

Jubal and his crew are a tired but wired, unbathed and unkempt fact-finding force--Jubal in a ratty T-shirt, the others tugging over the last pizza slice from a crumpled box.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Apathy had given way to unbathed obsession.
(more)

JUBAL (Cont'd)
Anne raided info-deposit boxes of ex-dictators. Miriam tracked down all the conspiracy-creeps from her Heroin period. Dorcas blackmailed a sex-victim victimizing director from Dorcas's CIA past. I didn't ask if the guy thought Dorcas was a man or a woman. I, the ex-"fighter for humanity," called in favors from people who never owed me one. Quite a tale was forming...

EXT. A RUN-DOWN MINI-MALL--DAY

Mike's anxious POV scans a rundown outdoor mall. UNRULY TEENAGERS buy small feedbags and tie them to their faces. Beltless Gillian sneaks up behind someone plugging into a media screen. A COUPLE in shiny new raincoats goggle over a Mike poster.

Mike is revealed in red hair, eating pistachios at a nervous pace, shells piling up before the fountain upon which he sits. Mike shakes off the activity overload by staring at the water and a splashing young boy. Gillian bounds up.

GILLIAN
According to Media, the WF is still playing the cool babysitter, letting you find yourself by yourself. It's a goodness that will crumble any second. We have to be keep careful and keep moving...

MIKE
I do not understand why your human cities do not wear out almost at once..so choked with living experience..events and emotions piled layer on endless layer...On Mars, everything is done. We need only reflect. Here everyone is doing-doing-doing. No stop. No reflect.

The playfully splashing boy is torn out by his mother and given a whack. Mike shudders. Gillian yawns.

GILLIAN
You'll get used to it.

MIKE
There are some things I never want to get used to. The pistachios I understand. Simple-perfect--I know rules. Must take shell off before eat. Must eat one by one--not ten shells off/eat ten--Wrong. Make big messy pile--no throw away shell each time. Rule. I grok without teach. The pistachios I understand.

GILLIAN
(tenderly)
Give me one of dem things...

MIKE
Damn tasty, are they not?

Mike holds out a pistachio. Gillian softly takes it from him. A Male Back cuts in, blocking the the viewer. The back belongs to Caxton, who takes in the couple's bliss, before mock-cheerfully cutting in.

CAXTON
Hey. Ace.

GILLIAN
Ben!

Gillian bounces up a hug to a soulfully accepting Caxton.

GILLIAN
How did you track...I won't ask. You're still the tops. Ben Caxton..Valentine Michael Smith..

CAXTON
Good to flesh you, Red.

Caxton lifts his hand to shake. Gillian bats it down.

GILLIAN
I'd wait...

INT. HOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

In a painfully white hotel room, regular-haired Mike and Caxton face in white chairs. Gillian is crashed on white bed. Caxton is wearing a micro-camera on his forehead.

MIKE
It's about 106 degrees warmer than I'm used to...but I like..

CAXTON
Not the heat, it's the humidity, eh?

GILLIAN
Oh dearie, "the weather"--so soon. One more, Caxton.

CAXTON
One? Okay. Is famed scientist Mary Valentine your mother--what do you know about her mysterious death?

Mike cringes up his head in pain. Gillian leaps off the bed.

GILLIAN
Damn you Caxton, you agreed no Origin questions! I told you what they did to him! Just what we need, 20,000 losers waiting for us at the gravesite, wanting Mike to autograph their raincoats.

CAXTON
Down boy..still get one more question. "Grok." Before it starts showing up on every T-shirt and lunch box--what does it mean?

MIKE
"Grok" means to understand so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the process being observed-- to merge, to blend, to intermarry...If I chop you up and make a stew of you...when I eat you, we would grok together and nothing would be lost and it would not matter which one of us did the chopping up and eating.

CAXTON
It would to me.

MIKE
Grokking is absolute, unquestioning, instant knowing. It is the basis of my basis.

CAXTON
Dash-30-dash. That's it--I gotta zoom back to D.C. and light this baby up...

Gillian fills a glass of water from a pitcher.

GILLIAN
That's not it. Leave your forehead on. Everyone should see this...

CAXTON
Water brotherhood? Geez Boardman, I don't know...

GILLIAN
You have to know.

MIKE
The beauty of sharing with a friend of a friend to be my friend. Drink deep my brother...

Caxton awkwardly takes the glass from Gillian and sips. Mike happily downs the rest of the glass.

CAXTON
You know, if you two want to pick up a little extra credits. Sweet deals have floated my way. Official Man from Mars blah-blah-blah with the Martian seal of-- It's more tasteful than it sounds.

GILLIAN
(pushing him)
I'll kindly assume you're kidding, knowing you're not.

CAXTON
Can't blame a guy for--I almost forgot...I swiped one of the spare undercover I.D. belts..

Caxton tosses Gillian an identity belt. She straps it around her waist.

GILLIAN
Oh, thank god! I couldn't plug in, buy shampoo, make a phone call...

CAXTON
Just don't forget you're a damn reporter. Would it kill you to turn on a recording device once in a while? Leave the newsmaking to my water-bro.

MIKE
Goodbye, Senor Caxton.

Mike tenatively shakes Ben's hand, who crumples in mock-agony. Mike recoils in horror.

CAXTON
Gotcha.

MIKE
You exaggerated your reaction to make mirth of my insecurity. If had the ability to laugh, I would certainly do so.

CAXTON
He needs work, Boardman, but I like him...

After Caxton rustles out the door, Gillian whips out her I.D. belt's plug and darts to the room's vidphone.

INT. JUBAL'S STUDY--NIGHT

The viewer pulls out on Jubal's plugged-in I.D. belt. The gang is still a wreck with more-red-than-white blood shot eyes. The phone spins to whoever talks.

GILLIAN (SCREEN)
You've been busy.

JUBAL
We've been busy. Ready?

MIKE (SCREEN)
(poking in)
Ready!

GILLIAN (SCREEN)
Mary Valentine and her people didn't die in South America, did they?

ANNE
No. A place much further away.

MIRIAM
Hey, no fast-forwarding!

JUBAL
A while back, the space program was in trouble. There had been a major space shuttle disaster, cuts in funding, but more than that, their ideas were tired, their big computers, dinosaurs.

ANNE
And then along came Mary...

INT. HOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

As if uppercut, Mike reels from the vid-phone, twitching into a stable position of pain. Gillian flickers compassion.

GILLIAN
Keep going..it hurts him, but he has to hear it.

DORCAS (SCREEN)
Mary Valentine and her team came in with cheaper, better software and something called innovation.

MIRIAM (SCREEN)
But the machines were not the only pegasaurases of the space program-- So were the men who ran it.

Mike curls on the bed. His eyes open.

FLASHBACK INT. VAST WAREHOUSE--DAY

Mike's eyes open. He is now laying on the seen-in-flashback workshop table. Dreamlike, Mike has made himself an unnoticed part of the scene. Charismatic Mary Valentine silently addresses her team.

MIRIAM (V.O.)
Mary had no time to clash with superiors.
(more)

MIRIAM (Cont'd)
She, along with her husband, doctor/mathematician Randolph Smith, formed the Rodan corporation with a team of fellow genius scientists and engineers.

JUBAL (V.O.)
The team's white whale was red. They wanted to go to Mars.

The viewer stops before an easel that holds a Mars photo.

A TIME MAGAZINE COVER

showing a beaming Mary Valentine Team metamorphs into a Time cover showing the wreckage of a plane crash.

ANNE (V.O.)
Base of operations moved to South America...where supposedly tragedy struck nine years later.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM

Satellite photos of some sort of installation ooze from the hotel vid-phone. Gillian snaps them up. Mike gives them a sickly peek. Jubal can be seen shoving the pix in on his end.

JUBAL (SCREEN)
My Brazil contact said Team Valentine had moved out four years before the quote-unquote plane crash. Dorcas hacked that piece of meat from the WF data classifieds. Sat-photos of the corporation's new base.

GILLIAN
God, where is it? Siberia?

JUBAL (SCREEN)
As a matter of fact, yes.

Mike lays back in a sweat.

INT./EXT. STARK CAMP ON TUNDRA--DAY

Looking very Amelia Earhart, Mary Valentine leads a diverse group of LEADERS AND SCIENTISTS, past software being installed, outside into the cold air. Beaming to his Mom, a still-sweating Mike, bounds beside the frozen faces.

ANNE (V.O.)
The mission was underwritten by an alliance of countries who could not afford space programs of their own.

A line of ominous intelligence agents holding black briefcases appear. Unfazed, Mary walks up and shakes their hands.

DORCAS (V.O.)
Eventually, the USA secretly came aboard, with money they had siphoned from some bogus "Star Wars" military program. They didn't mind piggybacking on Mary's brain. They liked not having to deal with all the post-shuttle-disaster public scrutiny. If the project was a success, they come out of the closet and take mucho credit. If it failed, no one would have to know.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM

JUBAL
The sound of the blast-off is well documented...How's Mike?

GILLIAN
Good. He's good.

The viewer moves in on a smiling Mike. Soundtrack fills with painfully loud blast-off noise.

INT. THE STUDY

Miriam sifts through crumpled yellow pages.

MIRIAM
These ship log pages I got from my conspiracy nuts refer to Mary as being pregnant...

INT. THE SPACE VESSEL

Tummy bursting against her outfit, Mary Valentine floats in a section of the vessel. Mike floats beside her, touching out.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
Come on, they don't allow pregnant women on a Ferris wheel, nobody's going to let one do a mission to Mars.

DORCAS (V.O.)
The flight back then took ten months. Do the math, Boardman.

INT. HOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

Mike is quivering at Gillian's feet. She pets him like a Labrador.

MIRIAM (SCREEN)
Looks like Mary and Dr. Smith got a little frisky up there during Month One.

GILLIAN
Keep going, this is amazing stuff...there, there, Mike, we're almost done.

DORCAS (SCREEN)
Uh, we <u>are</u> done..tapped everywhere-- no last leg of the voyage stuff.

MIRIAM (SCREEN)
Even my best freaks couldn't get Month Ten transcript pages...

JUBAL
They must have made it to Mars. The evidence is that guy on your carpet. Did Mike survive a crash? Did the Elders eat the crew and spit back out the kid? Who knows? I'm not God just because I look like him. Something happened, and it sure as hell wasn't a South American plane crash.

INT. SPACE VESSEL

Mary Valentine turns her face. Blood on it. Screaming.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Wailing himself, Mike bolts out onto a terrace. Panting, he takes in a night view of a Midwestern city. In the vague distance, a giant Fosterite symbol (cross combined with letter F) lights up the sky.

INT. THE STUDY

Everyone has heaved themselves before the screen.

ANNE
Gillian, how is he? Is he okay?

GILLIAN (SCREEN)
He does it a lot. He's okay. Relatively. How does a project so gargantuan stay under wraps?

JUBAL
Twenty-five key personnel die by "accident" within a week--you'd be surprised how well the other 600 can keep a secret..Anything else guys...

Miriam unsits herself from atop a paper pigpen.

MIRIAM
Just miscellaneousage--records of the astronaut's physicals, their Larkin signatures, Russian restaurant stubs...

Jubal reels back, almost religiously. He booms a laugh.

MIRIAM
It wasn't that funny. In fact, it wasn't funny.

JUBAL
Larkin. Right there all along. The Larkin Pioneer Act was drawn up back when it was thought everyone would be racing for moon minerals. Larkin said you land on land outside of Earth, then you are the owner of that land.

ANNE
Where you going with this, boss? Naturally all astronauts have to waive their individual rights to their country before blast-off.

JUBAL
Absolutely. You can see right there on those papers that Mary Valentine and her crew signed away their Larkin rights...

GILLIAN (SCREEN)
but Valentine Michael Smith sure as heck didn't sign any paper..

EXT. ON THE TERRACE

Mike POVs closer. The strange lit cross is revealed to be atop a mammoth church. Milling in front are men and women in all-black uniforms with red trim. Fosterites.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Gillian leans forward enraptured by Jubal's ramblings.

GILLIAN
Whoa-you're not going to say what I think you are going to say.

JUBAL (SCREEN)
Mike owns Mars. Affiliated to no one, Mike is technically the discoverer of Mars, its first settler, and according to Larkin, its ruler.

EXT. MARS

The viewer's viewpoint thunders across the dusty crimson expanse of Mars.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Any colonist coming to Mars after Mike is an immigrant who must play by Mike's "laws." Any business, be it mining industry or tourist industry, has to let Mike in on the profits.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
I guess this is what Douglas meant by "fortunes unknown."

INT. A VAST MODEL OF MARS

The actual terrain of Mars dissolves into a complex set of models and structures upon a fake Mars. The WF-Execs circle it.

JUBAL (V.O.)
The World Federation did not charter a mission to experience the wonder of the universe. Like everything else a government does, be it a war or an Olympics, they do it for power and wealth.

INT. THE STUDY--NIGHT

Jubal is looking out the study window to the stars in the sky.

JUBAL
Amazing. Behind all this mind-boggling science, malignant greed. A figure of fascination like VMS reduced to being bad for business.

GILLIAN (SCREEN)
They're hoping Mike will never realize the power he has.

JUBAL
But they'll leave nothing to chance. They're pretending to be open about the little ET, but make no mistake, it will not last. They want full payment on their investment.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Mike wobbles back into the room. Gillian turns.

GILLIAN
Did you hear all that, Mike? You own Mars.

MIKE
Can we visit the Fosterites now...Jubal promised.

Mike points to the lit-up F-cross.

GILLIAN
Uh, we have this expression: Let's don't and say we did.

JUBAL
Boardman! I haven't been out of my house in 12 years and I know enough to avoid the Main Fosterite Church off the I-73 turnpike.

GILLIAN
Whoa, I'm not the one who promised.

JUBAL (SCREEN)
I take it for granted "lying for one's own good" is not a Martian concept. Earth to Mike, you do know these Fosterites are going to go after you for the prestige of having you as a member...

MIKE
Yes, Jubal...but they are sincere in desiring to make the world a better place.

INT. JUBAL'S STUDY--NIGHT

Jubal counters, rumbling into wise old man mode.

JUBAL
Damn it, of course they're sincere. An average con man knows that he's lying, but a truly visionary Warper of minds ropes himself first. How about a nice boring Protestant picnic, instead?

MIKE (SCREEN)
You promised.

INT. HOTEL ROOM--LATER

An exhausted Gillian timbers into bed. Mike takes a seat.

GILLIAN
Mike. Do you still feel the need to visit your parents' grave, knowing no one is actually in there?

MIKE
The grave of your parents means something even if it is empty. This sound strange, I know, but this totem-grave-object with Mom/Dad's names and dates on it--it is the closest thing I have to a home. Need to see it-feel it-grok it.

GILLIAN
That doesn't strange. Sounds nice. You know, the faster we keep chugging down the road, not making stops, the faster we see the California grave and fufill your mission.

MIKE (SCREEN)
But to visit the Fosterites and figure them out and figure out Earth spirituality--that is my mission, too. Mission not just why-how me human, but also 'what is human?" Period. Question mark. Exclamation point.

GILLIAN
All-ri-ight. Tomorrow then.

Mike folds his hands, smiling in his amusingly familiar waiting position. Gillian burys her head under the pillow.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

The smooth Dryden and an out-of-place, hacker-looking TECHNICIAN sit at the table, sipping wine.

DRYDEN
So under the grip of this unbreakable document, we are at the mercy of this dopey half-alien. All of the Federation's dreams and visions transformed into a cosmic joke. Chilling.

TECHNICIAN
What a fucking brain-pain..

DRYDEN
But you've given me a very interesting card to play when the time comes...

TECHNICIAN
When I was fluxing the footage and this came up--I knew it was pretty mammoth.

DRYDEN
You did the right thing coming to me. Let's show it again..The check cleared, right?

TECHNICIAN
Most definitely.

The early confrontation between Mike and Berquist (from the POV of a hallway camera) comes on the room's screen.. The gun-toting Berquist is seen to vanish.

TECHNICIAN
One thing I'm not grasping, Mr. D; you want this space cadet out of the way--why not slide that disc over to Media?

DRYDEN
When a person is popular, very popular, bullets bounce off that person. Missiles bounce off. Like when you are in love, the lover can do wrong. Love fades. You stop forgiving. Mike is going to freak out and do something strange. He will have a lapse in lovability. The new doubt comes--I will be there with this footage. Drink up...

INT. HOTEL ROOM--THE NEXT MORNING

Gillian awakens. Mike is in the exact same waiting position.

GILLIAN
What are you waiting for? Let's go.

EXT. - OUTSIDE THE FOSTERITE CHURCH--DAY

Mike and Gillian mount an outdoor set of stairs to join hearty sightseers poised before an impossibly tall set of doors. Monitors show happy images of Fosterites having barbecues and sack races and such (in their constricting black uniforms). Gillian has to light up a cigarette.

GILLIAN
God, I hate going to church. So to speak.

MIKE
I think it's touching.

A GRINNING GUARD appears, a holographic halo over his head.

GRINNING GUARD
Excuse me, miss, please extinguish your nicotine stick or our guards inside will shoot you in the leg.

GILLIAN
(flicking away cig)
Touching.

INT. THE ARCADE OF THE CHURCH--DAY

Tourists scurry through the opening doors into an overwhelming arcade packed with info-screens and games both virtual and real. Kids race by with stuffed baby Hippos-in-Foster-uniforms. Gillian play-by-plays to a dazed Mike.

They pass ride/games with sledgehammer titles like DESTROY THE CLINIC! and CASTRATE THE PORNOGRAPHER! and a theatre announcing a 7 presentation of John Foster vs. the Alcohol Industry.

GILLIAN
Wee, Fosterite fascism can be fun! Look how they draw you in..Hippos for the kids...throw in some VR with subtle themes--Mike, you forgot to change your hair color! I mean, do something, give yourself some acne, a cold sore, something..

MIKE
I would think it much too hectic for myself to be noticed.

INT. SECURITY ROOM--DAY

Mike's face is frozen on a security monitor.

SURVEILLANCE MAN
Praise Foster! Deacon Blue, he has come!

INT. ARCADE

DEACON BLUE is a southern gentleman in a Fosterite uniform. A wee silver orb in his ear lights up--he swings his viewpoint around the arcade until he locks sight on Mike.

DEACON BLUE
Bishop Digby, joyous news...

INT. THE ACTUAL CHURCH AREA OF THE CHURCH--DAY

The earlier-seen bald Bishop Digby is pounding the pulpit.

BISHOP DIGBY
And as Old Man Foster used to spout, "If you don't like the taste of champagne, then put your mouth..."
(touching ear)
My God...Fosterites, the Man from Mars is with us!

A revealed Fosterite congregation rises and rejoices.

INT. ARCADE

Oblivious to the orgy of recognition, Mike and Gillian continue to drift through the chaos.

GILLIAN
Maybe I'm being a little paranoid, but it's important not to be spotted...

DEACON BLUE
Valentine Michael Smith, they call me Deacon Blue. Welcome to Paradise.

GILLIAN
Fuck.

Bookended by holo-halo-ed bodyguards, Deacon Blue insinuates himself before Mike.

DEACON BLUE
Bishop Digby begged for an angel to flutter down to help us get the Foster message out..

MIKE
That is kind of you, Deacon, but please also make eye-contact with my friend and guide, Gillian Boardman.

DEACON BLUE
(ignoring Gillian)
So what do you think so far, Mike?

Mike gives off a confused half-smile, uncomfortably zeroing in on the gaudy effects, the bamboozled children, and especially the haloed guards packing guns. Blue leads his guests into an opening wall.

INT. PASSAGEWAY TO THE CHURCH

They are in a circular room of vividly colored, Wonkaesque design. The room begins to slowly revolve. As Gillian stumbles, Blue purrs into a nervous Mike's ear.

DEACON BLUE
Are you ready to rumble for the coming of the glory of the Sacred Normal?

MIKE
Uh, I'm not sure.

The room stops--the wall reopens.

INT. THE CHURCH

The trio emerges into the middle of Bishop Digby's service. Mike and Gillian are Bambies before the headlights as the Fosterite congregation leaps to its feet.

DIGBY
A fresh and intelligent specimen kept in the equivalent of a sound proof booth for over thirty-five years--he comes out for the ultimate spiritual taste test and who does he choose? Foster!

A spotlight blasts on Mike. Gillian touches out to his shuddering body.

BISHOP DIGBY
I can only hope Mike hasn't been brainwashed with all that Freedom of Speech-Press-Choice nonsense. Why is the Almighty Freedom to be Wrong more important than the need to be Correct? I'm sorry, but Wrong is Wrong! Correct is Correct! Shout it so Mike's friends on Mars can hear it..

THE CROWD
WE ARE NOT THE RIGHT! WE ARE NOT THE LEFT! WE ARE THE ABOVE!

Bishop Digby slyly backs into a piece of wall. Deacon Blue tugs Mike into the same opening. Gillian hustles forward..

INT. THE SANCTUM

Darkness gives way to a wide, eerily-lit space where a LINE OF FOSTERITES sit back in similar, super-tech MACHINE/CHAIRS, where each Fosterite has a tube in their mouth, a syringe in their arm, and a periscope-type device harnessed over their eyes.

DEACON BLUE
You have been bestowed a supreme honor. You are in Sanctum.

GILLIAN
This has been great, really. But we should be getting over to the souvenir shop. Mike had his eye on those Fosterite Mugs with the adorable sayings on them...

DEACON BLUE
You're probably wondering about the chairs...

MIKE
Yes, Deacon Blue, I am wondering...

Blue leads his troubled visitors down the line of chair/machines.

BLUE
People have "private" feelings sometimes and we have found complete denial is unproductive. That's where the XC-NN comes in or as we like to call it around here, the Sin Machine. That tube is flowing in some top-notch Foster moonshine. In the syringe, we got a blend of something of the drug nature. Periscope's showing your basic porno. Afterward, the ladies and gents will be detoxed and mildly electrocuted. Sins are not sins when committed by appointment under Foster's eyes.

Blue gives a proud glance to a large glass case where the polished corpse of JOHN FOSTER is preserved on a throne. Mike murmurs toward him, a bit queasy.

MIKE
Wrongness. I grok wrongness...

DEACON BLUE
Don't he look natural? That's just the pose he was in when he went to Heaven...Have I told you the boys at the lab are putting finishing touches on making race change operations a reality?

GILLIAN
Race-change operations? You Fosterites are...nutty.

A hand reaches out from the darkness behind Mike. It grasps Mike's shoulder and pulls him into the darkness.

DEACON BLUE
Wouldn't you agree, overtly personal characteristics, especially racial ones, always cause problems. By making everyone the same multi-cultural tint, we eliminate tension...

GILLIAN
(noticing disappearance)
What have you done with him..!

INT. THE REVEREND'S CHAMBER

In an otherwise completely dark chamber, beams of light illuminate Bishop Digby and a sitting Mike. As the Bishop works the room, his beam of light keeps contact with him.

BISHOP DIGBY
We're a good match, Mike. You're the ultimate seeker. I'm the ultimate finder. People need to have the Sacred Normal defined to them. People don't want to have to take the stairs. They want a nice conveyor belt that they can just get on and gli-ide...Praise Foster, I feel you getting excited..

Mike's body begins to quake.

BISHOP DIGBY
A true Religion should do more than preach. It should enforce! There's this library in Texas that has the largest collection of banned vulgar-racist-sexist-sacreligious books in the world. It is a pimple on the planet that must be popped. I'd love to bounce a couple ideas off you--Do we detonate when the library is empty of people or when it's full-- the age-old question, right?

Mike raises his head back up, pupils are tinted blue.

INT. SANCTUM--OUTSIDE CHAMBER DOOR

Gillian bolts to the dark wall and begins fiercely banging on it.

BLUE
Now, now, I'm sure the Bishop just wanted a little chat with that delightful ET, away from the hustle/bustle...

GILLIAN
(seething)
If you don't open up this door, you're going to end up in the glass case with Old John Foster, you sneaky son-of-a...

Mike emerges. Alone. Blue feels vindicated.

BLUE
Now was that so unpleasant? Your "friend" is not very open-minded, Mike. How do you feel, buddy?

GILLIAN
Mike?

Mike feverishly rockets away...Blue pokes his head into the empty chamber. The mini-spotlights insanely spin around.

INT. THE CHURCH

With the congregation belting away, Mike comes storming into the chapel area knocking over the podium.

INT. THE REVOLVING PASSAGEWAY

Mike staggers into the revolving room. As the room spins, he stands and stares, then furiously charges right into the swirling walls.

INT. THE ARCADE

Mike's body explodes through the wall, into the arcade. He throttles forward, weaving through shocked visitors.

INT. THE NOW-STOPPED REVOLVING ROOM

Gillian wobbles into the wreckage of the stopped revolving room. Quivering, she darts through the gaping hole.

INT. ARCADE

Gasping, Mike dashes closer and closer to the mighty entrance doors, toppling two guards (shorting out their halos). Mike crushes through the doors into the light.

INT. DINER--NIGHT

The sunlight becomes a dingy overhead light. Incognito in a trucker hat, Mike wavers just outside his realm of total-death-white withdrawal. The slightly grungy Customers of a classic roadside diner give suspicious glances to his booth.

MIKE
..no right-no left-sins are not sins..

GILLIAN
Oh, Mike, Mike, you have to keep it together, man. People are watch..

WAITRESS
Know what you want?

GILLIAN
Uh, yeah, synth-burger, hold the zenon X-45 sauce--and water. Water helps.

The waitress grumps off. Gillian shakes the whitening Mike.

MIKE
I thought religion want to make world--
what's word?-domino?-sausage?-- blossom-
I thought religion want to help world
blossom. Instead, Fosterites want to
swallow. Pistachios I understand. Not
Religion..

GILLIAN
Oh Mike, you can't keep trying to grok
everything at once. I wish I had answers
for you but I never even ask the
questions you ask..I want you to kiss
me, Mike.

Softening, Mike leans to Gillian. And is wrenched out of the booth as if by some invisible puppeteer. Mike hangs limply in mid-air. The waitress drops the glass of water. The Diner Patrons launch up into gasps and screams. Mike's eyes go red.

EXT. OUTSIDE MARS

The viewer's viewpoint swooshes right at Mars.

IMAGES

fill the screen. The Three Fosterites self-destructing. Anne zooming in for a kiss. Different calligraphy from different books. Bishop Digby points to Mike's POV with a spotlight hit. Caxton hugs Gillian with longing. Screaming A.D. soldiers disappear.

EXT. ON MARS

Soaking in the messages, the thick wise Martians tremble.

INT. THE DINER

Mike continues to vibrate in air.

TRUCKER
Shit, that's the man from Mars!

Less frightened, if not downright enthused, men, woman, and children begin vulgarly snapshooting with their belt cameras.

MORE IMAGES

reverberate. The Fosterite "cross" lights up. Sleeping with her mouth open in the car, Gillian awakens in cute embarassment. Raincoated Mike worshippers hover over a map. Mike's POV rushes through the church doors into sunlight.

INT. THE DINER--NIGHT

Drained, Mike's body falls. Gillian slides to catch him. Belts continue to flash as Gillian heaves him out of frame.

INT. JUBAL STUDY

Crashed in the Study, Jubal and company watch Caxton wind up.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
And his favorite color is blue. More in my interview with our historic neighbor tomorrow. In other reality..the Landmark Exchange program suffered a setback when the Statue of Liberty, in its tour of Sector China, was attacked...

Miriam mutes an image of a disembodied Statue of Liberty.

MIRIAM
I hate this. Why hasn't Gillian called?

JUBAL
Front!

DORCAS
Now? Aren't you worried about Mike's Fosterite field trip?

JUBAL
Last line: "Now that the trial was over, and I was still princess"-- damn, lost my train..

ANNE
You've got more important things on your mind. Important things you may even want to write about.

JUBAL
Just because Mike--damnit! Don't tell me what I want to write!

ANNE
So sorry. And what is the name we will be using as the author of this latest piece of trash?

JUBAL
J.J. Janway!

DUKE
(fixing something)
Might wanna throw back on the sound, Grouch...

Jubal unmutes an image of Deacon Blue having his head shaved.

BLUE (SCREEN)
..correct. He spontaneously rose to heaven! As new Bishop, I think to what Old Man Foster used to..

DORCAS
"spontaneously rose to Heaven?"

MIRIAM
You don't think Mike had anything to do with...

All chasitisingly look to Miriam.

EXT. AN OPEN FIELD--NIGHT

The Mustang convertible is in a field under a gorgeous expanse of stars. Gillian circles the car, smoking a cigarette. Mike awakens in the back.

GILLIAN
I know there your Almighty Elders and all but why do they cause such pain!

MIKE
They need to surprise my eyes. Take seeking, curiousing eyes. Only through view of point of my human eyes can they achieve mission. Make Decision.

GILLIAN
Decision? What decision?

Mike stands up in the backseat and stretches himself.

MIKE
The decision of whether they should destroy this third planet from Chanko-- I said something wrong?..I meant "destroy" in good sense of word.

GILLIAN
Stop it! Stop talking like that!

A recorder is revealed to be strapped behind Gillian. She twitches to her knees. From her angle, Mike seems to float amid the stars.

MIKE
You see, by Martian standards, you are diseased and crippled people-- the things you do to each other, your failure to grok one another, your wars and sicknesses and famines and cruelties-- You have phrase.."mercy killing."

GILLIAN
You can't just blow up a planet!

MIKE
Fundamental knowledge of physics-- how Matter is put together--With my abilities mental-- ability to make vanish..I could destroy Earth right now..Think to piece of the core about hundred miles in diameter-- "Poof."

GILLIAN
All this time helping you, driving you...gathering bits of data to help us die!

Gillian seethes up to pound her fists on the hood.

MIKE
Gillian, don't anger now please. I need you..

GILLIAN
Get away from me! You're not human! Creature!

Mike trembles. He and the Mustang disappear. Gillian's crying cuts off. She touches out with her hands...

GILLIAN
Mike, you didn't have to..oh, Mike.

EXT. ROADSIDE VIDEO-PHONE BOOTH

Gillian is collapsed at the bottom of a video-phone booth, racked with sobs. Jubal's face tries to look down to her.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Gillian told us of how the Eyes of Mars were upon us and that the phrase "the End of the world as we know it" was something we were finally going get to know. She also told us that she had destructed Mike...It is one call I shouldn't have picked up.

Jubal's head sadly droops. He turns off his phone.

INT. MEDIA CENTER

Part-journalist, part unrequited lover, Caxton paces at a swollen-from-crying-trying-to-cover-it Gillian.

JUBAL (V.O.)
She was thankfully less forthcoming with her boss.

CAXTON
You seem upset.

GILLIAN
I'm not. It just got a little weird for me.

CAXTON
What?--He wants to bring you home to meet the Elders? Tried to stick his thingie in your ear because that's the way Martians..

Gillian wrenches her recorder from the back of her blouse.

GILLIAN
You want to know what he said?! You really want to know?

CAXTON
Yes, I want to know.

GILLIAN
He said some strange shit. The guy's from Mars..

Retreating, Gillian thuds the recorder back into her attache and slams the lid.

EXT.- SNOWBANK OSTENSIBLY IN MONTANA

A placid view of a perfect snowbank. Suddenly, the Mustang reappears in the snow with Mike in the driver's seat. He is wiping a pink liquid from his eyes.

JUBAL (V.O.)
A Martian chose only to self-destruct when the time was right. For Valentine Michael Smith, the time was not right.

The car comically has trouble starting. It eventually kicks in.

EXT. THROUGH A SMALL CITY--DAY

Mike drives with a sad expression. He has a black Afro.

JUBAL (V.O.)
There were still too many questions that needed answers, for the Elders and himself.

He drives by screens showing the Caxton water-sharing. And then by a line of people waiting for transport, all reading the book MIKEISMS.

INT. THE DINER--DAY

Followers of Mike in their shiny raincoats have invaded the diner where Mike had his tizzy. They put flowers on the levitation spot.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Gleefully ignorant of Mike's inner turmoil, his followers sanctified him as a perfect being. The locations of Mike's few confirmed sightings were transformed into shrines.

The viewer's viewpoint drifts outside the diner where a multitude of more followers lay prostrate in awe.

EXT. CAMP SET-UP IN OPEN FIELD--DAY

Hundreds of raincoated worshipers have set up tents in a field, like Deadheads waiting for showtime. The viewer ambles through the crowd taking in the street preaching, the "Grok Hard" T-shirts, the endless water-sharing..

FOLLOWER ONE
If you listen closely to Caxton Interview-Episode 2, Mike mentions "Gravity hurt at first."

FOLLOWER TWO
(sipping water)
So brother, you're saying during the Diner levitation, Mike achieved a state of bliss based on..

The viewer's viewpoint is actually Mike's. In hippiesque hair and a yellow raincoat, he zombies through the crowd.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike drifted. Body and spirit. His desire to visit his parents grave, his wish to trace his origin, and his basic need to grok, began to fade. Mike discovered how easy it was to blend, to become invisible, to be nothing. The World Federation was really beginning to miss the guy.

INT. THE FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The Federation is viewing hidden camera footage of the followers' gathering.

AFRICAN FEMALE EXECUTIVE
As you can see we got a full fledged cult here. One that has never met its leader.

DOUGLAS
God help us when they do. So where is the happy-happy Martian fuck? It's been too quiet. Damn him! All our hard work stained by a living, breathing technicality. Face it, when it comes to real estate, this planet is over.

RUSSIAN EXEC
We've wagered this planet to build on that one. The thought VMS gets dollar one from every goddamn Pizza Hut we put up there--I boil...

ASIAN EXECUTIVE
Even if he doesn't figure things out. Someone will. And they'll tell him for a percentage..He's coming to get us. I feel it.

An Anxiety Disposal LIEUTENANT approaches Dryden, sotto voce. He holds out a picture of the earlier-seen Technician.

LIEUTENANT
He's been taken care of, sir.

DRYDEN
Wait--you killed this man? I only wanted an assurance of his silence.

LIEUTENANT
Sir, this is a tragedy. On my life, I thought the order was...

DRYDEN
Lieutenant. I'm kidding. You did fine.

DOUGLAS
Dryden, what are you whispering about down there?

DRYDEN
I apologize. I didn't mean to interrupt your pathetic whining. Fellow Executives, there is only one question you need to be asking yourself: When the time comes, and the time will come sooner than you think, will you be willing, in order to protect your interests, put to death the most beloved figure of our time? Everything else is trivia.

EXT. THE CARNIVAL--DAY

A FAMILY is huddled around a screen at a run-down carnival.

VOICE OF MEDIA
Hello. This is Media. The Focus of the Now is this: Where is the Man from Mars and is he okay?

JAY and JASPER, two ole hustlers, one big and black, the other small and white, motor on by.

JAY
How's the new guy working out?

JASPER
Guy does amazing stuff. But you know. You know what I'm saying.

JAY
I <u>don't</u> know what you're saying.

JASPER
Take a look.

Jay and Jasper poke their heads through a tent.

INT. TENT--DAY

Mike is on stage in a bad wizard outfit, juggling a multitude of eggs. His patter is not the best.

MIKE
Boy, I never knew the sector's diary products could be used in such unusual ways. Ha. Ha.

Magician Mike lets loose the eggs across the audience. The eggs disappear. Crowd politely applauds. Mike bows then dives into the audience. He disappears. Crowd politely applauds.

EXT. THE CARNIVAL AREA

Jay and Jasper pull back out of the tent.

JAY
Okay. I know what you're saying.

MIKE
What is it you know? Why do I suck?

Jay and Jasper do a slight double-take to the approaching Mike, who is wiping away the pink post-teleportation stuff.

JASPER
"Suck" is a strong word, son. That disappearing thing was incredible...

JAY
Jasper is right. Incredible...

MIKE
You are both about to say the word "But..."

JASPER
Identical twins are like that.
(a beat)
Gee, kid, don't you know a good line when you hear one?

MIKE
No. I don't. It's a problem.

JAY
Your tricks are good. But tricks don't make a magician. It's called Showmanship. Whether you're a politician or preacher pounding a pulpit--you've got to get in touch with something that says--God, it's bad out there, but folks, for the next ten minutes, it ain't bad in here.

JASPER
Gotta be able to say to the crowd--I get the joke, you get the joke, we all get the joke.

MIKE
Which joke would that be?

JAY
I dunno, the joke of life? You know who you should learn from--the Man from Mars.

MIKE
But I am the man from Mars.

JASPER
Exactly. We're all the Man from Mars. That's his appeal. Here's a guy from another planet-- lonely, clueless, probably gets scared at the sound of popcorn--but the little guy keeps at it with a stupid grin on his face. Just like we all have to.

MIKE
Intrigueresting conversation.

Lost in thought, Mike walks off. And completely disappears.

JAY
Telling ya. Guy's got potential.

JASPER
Definitely.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

Wiping pink gunk from pupils, Mike materializes into a bustling hotel lobby in his adorably dorky wizard garb. Guests wince with confusion. Gillian emerges from an elevator.

MIKE
Hi.

GILLIAN
(happy tears)
Hi. So I guess you didn't self-destruct for me...

MIKE
No, I just teleported. Don't take it personally. Just because the ones who raised me are contemplating annihilation of planet doesn't mean you should shut me away...Please no.

Gillian does a "Keep it down" body manuever, slicing through the crowd for an intimate face-to-face.

GILLIAN
Did you grok what you wanted to grok?

MIKE
It's one thing to read an entire library about life, it's another to step in it. I need some action. I need a kiss...

Mike and Gillian lean toward each other, when suddenly he breaks off. Gillian and the rest of the lobby watch their tender reunion flake away.

MIKE
I said Earth people always doing-doing-doing, but now know no one is doing anything! Everyone just observing everyone observing everyone. No doing! Your history books refer to great building of "information highway" but never say what's the information. No matter what is said as long as it's said fast! Look at this man, this man named Jerry, right?

Mike launches toward a SAD BUSINESSMAN, lugging luggage. Then soft-shoes back to a STOCKY WOMAN at the check-out desk. Everyone is transfixed by Mike's nimble piece of theatre.

MIKE
You want information. Jerry is lonely. And oh, does he hate his job. Did you see how he just walked by Barbara, here? Barbara is lonely, too. Her dead mother died and left her money; she wants to use for dorky-scary space-cruise to meet man. She could use money to open flower shop because she loves flowers, but she needs someone good with numbers. Guess? Jerry is great with numbers. Guess? He loves flowers. They're people who will never meet! Shucks, maybe now; Jerry--meet Barbara/Not Barb. Barbara/Not Barb--meet Jerry...

Gillian thrusts Mike into the elevator. For a moment, it seems Jerry and Barbara will speak and fall in love--instead, they both shuffle away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Mike rides a roll into the room. Gillian is a bomb squad leader.

MIKE
Two areas where Earthlings actually try to grok sense of world--Science and Religion..

GILLIAN
Mike, let's talk about you...

MIKE
Science! I was taught more about how physical universe is put together while I was still in the nest than human scientists can yet handle. I can't even talk to them about something as elementary as levitation. I'm not insulting human scientists...But you don't grok a desert by counting its grains of sand.

GILLIAN
Mike, please, your brain is going to explode or mine...

Gillian latches out to Mike. He darts to a hotel drawer and yanks up a Bible.

MIKE
So the answer to life's riddles should be in here. Or in one of the others. Only it's not. Bits and pieces that grok true, but..

Gillian lunges out and kisses Mike. Then staggers back.

GILLIAN
Whuh, they were right...

MIKE
It sure beats the shit out of card games. I want to grow closer. Words "I love you" strike me as lifeless redundant, but hey..I love you, baby.

Mike's eyes flash blue. Gillian's blazer disappears.

GILLIAN
Mike, what are you..I'd like to, you know, grow a little closer, but we can't just..

Her dress dissolves to nothing. The venetian blinds of the room flutter shut. Gillian's blouse vanishes.

MIKE
I'm still wearing my virginity, okay? Help me take off.

GILLIAN
Hey Wiz, that was a hundred credit blouse you just sent to Fairyland-- Not the shoes! It took me years to find ones I..How come I'm the only one undress-- ing.

Mike's wizard outfit completely poofs, silencing Gillian. Mike manuevers the bed into a spin to catch their collapsing bodies.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM--LATER IN THE NIGHT

Mike and Gillian are in the middle of a sweating roll.

GILLIAN
Mike, we gotta...stop. Need air.

Blinds salute back up, revealing the night. Window cracks a breeze.

MIKE
If you could see yourself the way I see you, you would know why I do never want to stop.

Mike's pupils go purple. So do Gillian's. Through a strange filter, Mike's shared POV drifts lovingly over Gillian.

MIKE (V.O.)
Can you feel. The way I think to you.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
Yes...I'm beautiful..

INT. HOTEL ROOM--LATER

Mike and Gillian are clenched together, cheeks bonded by sweat.

MIKE
Blending of physical bodies with simultaneous merging of souls, giving and receiving and delighting in each other--

GILLIAN
Yeah, it's nice, isn't it?

The viewer's viewpoint floats back to reveal Mike and Gillian artfully entwined around each other, SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR.

EXT. A BEAUTIFUL PARK--DAY

In matching downright yuppified sweaters, Mike (with a crewcut) and Gillian stroll out of a transport into a beautiful park, quite the normal couple (Ha).

MIKE
Sex. Sex.

GILLIAN
Mike, you've been saying that word ever since we got in the transport-- quit it.

MIKE
Sex. I can't help it. Sex. I learn something new everyday, but yesterday...sex, I honestly don't know how you get anything done around here. Of the nine planets I know to have life, this is the only one--well, there's a place in Galaxy Andromeda that has this oral thing but trust me, it's unpleasant-- I've seen drawings.

Passersby on the park give glances to the over-animated stranger. Mike's giddiness is quelled by an INTENSE WOMAN IN A YELLOW RAINCOAT spouting from a number of in-use screens.

INTENSE FEMALE FOLLOWER (SCREEN)
As a follower of all that is Mike, I speak from the hallowed ground..

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FAMOUS DINER--DAY

The viewer floats out behind the Intense Female Follower to see a more mighty than ever population of yellow raincoats camping, lying, and praying all around the hapless Diner.

INTENSE FEMALE FOLLOWER
..of Captain Fred's Diner. What began as nothing more than a fan club is now a religion. That word used to scare me, but the coccoon has hatched...

EXT. THE PARK PATH--DAY

Mike and Gillian turn from the screen to ease down a path.

INTENSE FEMALE FOLLOWER (SCREEN)
I think Mars is a little closer to Heaven than Earth is. Mike, oh simple Mike, we wait for you..

GILLIAN
No offense, but how do you squeeze a religion out of one guy saying "I want to grok your world"

MIKE
If I had the ability to laugh, I'd certainly do so. But their sad is real. Their void is not full.

Mike is overcome by a seething. He withers to the ground.

GILLIAN
I'm sorry. It's my fault.

MIKE
I don't understand. How could...

GILLIAN
This isn't just a park, Mike. The transport took us to California.

MIKE
The grave. Mother..Father...

Gillian pushes back a set of branches, revealing a graveyard.

EXT. CEMETERY

Hot tears searing down his face, Mike, and Gillian, weave down a grassy ridge into a small cemetery. Many of the tombstones are old; A large high-tech tombstone stands out--Mary Valentine's and Dr. Randolph Smith's names upon it.

MIKE
My mission..Parents. What are-why need--what meaning--I know not these people! No tears of sadness. Just tears of pain.

GILLIAN
This is too much of a surprise for you, I shouldn't have..Let's go back and have more sex. Let's just jettison, all right? I mean, the thing is empty, anyway..

MIKE
I told you. It is not empty. There is no one buried here, yes-true. But it is not empty. It is full..!

Mike slams down his hand on the grave. His body jolts.

EXT. MARS

The viewer's viewpoint moves dead-silently toward a parked space vessel. Through a porthole, Mary Valentine screams.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL BUILDING

A plunging aerial view of the world's Capitol.

INT. SPACE VESSEL

An artistic design of blood floats. Baby's screams are heard.

INT. THE WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE TABLE

The viewer dizzies around the empty WF conference table.

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD--DAY

Gillian linebackers Mike's bucking body away from the grave, into soft heather. He looks to the sky, quite composed.

MIKE
They died on Mars. But they did not crash. Everything I almost know. We have tried to get inforama everywhere except where we most know it to exist. We must go to Capitol building to get rest of the everything.
(rising)
Take me to your leader.

GILLIAN
Mike, you don't know what you're saying. You can't go to D.C. To the World Federation, you're an obstacle to all the money in the world. Two worlds! I know you have powers, but they'll find a way to crush-kill-destroy you!

MIKE
I can not run from these people anymore, must stop criss-zigging and cross-zagging away from my problems. Elders communicate before I can be allowed to have past or future, I must clear the present. Which way to transport?

GILLIAN
You can not go to the hideout of your enemy! It's just not done! A fox does not run toward the hounds. Why can't you be one of those purely logical aliens? Mike, you can't do this...

MIKE
(ambling off)
So, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, right?

GILLIAN
Well, yeah, but...wait!

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE--NIGHT

Gillian is plugged into a vidphone booth, shouting to Caxton.

GILLIAN
He's walking up the steps of our planet's capitol as I speak! It's suicide! I can't stop him!

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Keep on him--this is huge! If you're not out by sunrise, Media will go Satellite 17. Get him!

Swinging out of the booth, Gillian dashes up to a vaguely majestic view of the nation's capitol with its big globe on top. A profoundly lone figure in the distance ascends the Steps. Mike.

INT. CAPITOL LOBBY--NIGHT

Mike ambles in the lobby, atop a mural of Earth on the floor. He looks up through an awesome skylight to the stars. A CAPITOL GUARD rushes up, highly miffed by Mike's gall.

CAPITOL GUARD
How did you get in here? The door is locked and...

GILLIAN
(rushing in)
I'm sorry, sir. You see, we're lost and...

CAPITOL GUARD
Lock lips. You people are coming with me. You're in a lot of mucus.

Mike calmly brings his head down from looking at the stars.

MIKE
Could you tell us where the conference room is, please?

CAPITOL GUARD
What? You damn pogo, you're not going anywhere, except our holding tank!

MIKE
(staring intently)
..around the hall...on the left..Room number?

CAPITOL GUARD
I never...How did...Oh man, you're the Man from Mars.
(thinking Mike away)
"Oh I wish they all could be California girls..."

MIKE
Room Nine. Thank you. Please forget you saw us.

CAPITOL GUARD
Forget that I saw you! I'm not forgetting shit! Now get down or..

The Capitol Guard angrily points his gun at the trotting off Mike and Gillian, then yawns. He reholsters and strolls back to his station.

INT. THE WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Mike and Gillian breathlessly plow through the conference room doors. Then stop dead. At the end of the table is Dryden. He rises up, taking off reading glasses.

DRYDEN
I work late. Ever since you landed, "Mike," I haven't really slept. I'm unsettled by you. I'm unsettled by space. I don't understand the need to explore it, to care about it. I don't "grok" it, if you will. I don't understand why stars have to be anything more than pretty lights. This constant need some people have to go beyond, to expand..Seems pointless. Seems wrong.

MIKE
You're very--what's the word-- creepy.

GILLIAN
Yeah, spare us your sick soliloquies--we want to know..

Dryden begins a glowering glide around the conference table.

DRYDEN
Code-naming you VMS was not my best idea. People were bound to find out what it stood for. But tell me, did you ever wonder about the "Michael" in Valentine Michael Smith? Did you, Mike?

INT. HALLWAY--FLASHBACK DAY

An ultra-cool man in a uniform and sunglasses comes strutting down a hallway in slight slow motion. CAPTAIN MICHAEL BRANT.

DRYDEN (V.O.)
It comes from Captain Michael Brant--the man chosen to lead the Rodan corporation's expedition to Mars. Handsome, charismatic, had commanded two shuttle missions. He fucked your mother.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Mike slaps a hand to his head in response to a super shaft of pain. Gillian rushes to comfort. Dryden is enjoying himself.

INT. THE SPACE VESSEL--FLASHBACK NIGHT

Mary Valentine vibrates astride Captain Brant in a tight area of the space vessel. Stars shine through a porthole.

DRYDEN (V.O.)
Oh, the scary-wondrous-daring of it all. A little fun between consensual geniuses.

INT. DOCTRS QUARTERS OF THE SHIP--FLASHBACK DARKNESS

The bespectacled Dr. Smith shakes a test tube.

DRYDEN (V.O.)
Mary's loving husband, Ship Doctor Randolph Smith, quickly determined his wife was pregnant. He didn't need to exercise much of his renowned mathematical skills to figure out he was not the Daddy.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Mike painfully wobbles into a seat.

GILLIAN
Are you going somewhere with this story?

MIKE
He's going everywhere.

DRYDEN
The good doctor took his own news very well. Valentine, Michael, and Dr.
(more)

DRYDEN (Cont'd)
Smith made a very mature statement to the crew. No hard feelings, let's just get to Mars, and all that.

Mike lifts his drenched-in-sweat head from the cool surface of the conference table.

MIKE
Show the tape.

DRYDEN
(touching forehead)
Ah, you're reading ahead..Excitement of the landing pushed up the birth. About a half-hour after the landing...I hope this is cued up..

Dryden punches some buttons on a console. The screen percolates to life.

INT. SPACE VESSEL INTERIOR (ON SCREEN)

A shaky camera image shows the demure Dr. Smith. The loud wailing of a baby can be heard in the background.

DR. SMITH (SCREEN)
I'm Dr. Randolph Smith..It's a boy. Unfortunately Mary, the great Mary Valentine, died during the birth.
(a snort)
Not entirely true. She died <u>after</u> the birth. Nine scalpel punctures to the neck I believe was the official cause of death. I do not regret it. Don't regret cutting open Captain Michael Brant's throat, either, if you must know...

A corpse floats into view behind Dr. Smith.

DR. SMITH (SCREEN)
Poisoning the rest of the crew. <u>That</u> I regret. Gets crazy--sick up here. They warn you--but then ten actual months--hurtling around. Wife does things with another man--it's bad anywhere--but here, gets to you..

Two more ASTRONAUT CORPSES drift by like balloons at the end of a party.

DR. SMITH (SCREEN)
We made history. And I had to go and get human on everybody. Wow, I died on Mars. God, help me..

Dr. Smith puts a strange canister in his mouth. He reaches out to the camera and places it down where it happens to film the screeching baby Mike. A sharp off-screen detonation is heard. A spray of blood baptizes the baby.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM

Dryden freeze-frames the image of the wailing baby.

DRYDEN
All that time and effort and money and brillance and that's how it ended. Ruined by a pathetic little soap opera.

It starts as a snort. Then a rumble. Then, for the first time in his life, Mike laughs. It is an unnerving, unremitting noise that needs a lot more practice.

GILLIAN
He's laughing. You're laughing. But you can't..not now..

DRYDEN
(to phone)
Get me security
(toward Mike)
What is so goddamn funny...

INT. HOLDING TANK--MORNING

Mike and Gillian have been corralled into a holding tank with bars that are laser rather than steel. Mike's face has a gaping smile.

MIKE
Well, at least my headache's gone.

Mike bursts out laughing again. Gillian covers her ears.

GILLIAN
Why are you laughing now of all times? The WF has us at their mercy. They could cut off our heads and say we died of food poisioning and the world is contracted to believe it.

MIKE
That's funny! "Food poisioning." I get it. I finally get it. I know why people laugh. They laugh because it hurts so much...because it's the only thing that'll make it stop hurting. I look at that film of Mr. Dryden's and I see all the cruel and utterly unexplainable things I've seen and heard and read about in the time I've been with my fellow Earthlings--and it hurts so much I'm laughing.

GILLIAN
Did I miss something...That film was the death of your mother and your father and the death of a dream..Mike, a bloody baby is not funny.

MIKE
Well, not the way you tell it...Come on, admit-- Death is humorous. To Earthlings, unforseen death is so sad you must laugh at it. All those religions--they contradict each other on every other point but every one of them is filled with ways to help people be brave enough to laugh even though they know they are dying...

GILLIAN
I worry about you. Hey, this Dryden has tried to quarantine you, suppress you, destroy you in every way from the moment you touched down. Call me rude, but why haven't you blinked your eyes and made that manipulating son-of-a-bitch disappear?

MIKE
I grok that would be a pretty neat idea, but if you can believe it, we're water brothers. And I can not harm a water brother. I know, I was stupid to share with him. I was new on the planet. I didn't know a lot of people. I had never seen so much water; it was everywhere and it was beautiful.

GILLIAN
Okay, okay...slut. Wait, let me get this straight, you can't hurt Dryden, but if you want, you can tell your friends over on Mars to turn our entire planet into a ball of ash?

MIKE
(laughing)
Yes...Any other questions?

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The fellow Federation Executives settle into their seats for an emergency morning meeting. Dryden has the floor.

DRYDEN
Fellow Executives, he has fallen into our lap. And let me tell you he is a maniac of raving incompetence, incapable of dealing with something as complex as Larkin..

DOUGLAS
Are you sure no one knows he's been snared? If it gets out we...

DRYDEN
I'm not demanding the man's execution here. Let him be as popular as ever. We'll put him in a compound. People can visit, take pictures, buy goofy T-shirts. Like Graceland. Mike can sit in a big booth and say his annoying little sayings when the tourists press a button. Definitely needs to be drugged though..

ASIAN EXECUTIVE
(wearing earphone)
Uh, Dryden. Complications.

The Asian Executive works his console. Ben Caxton appears on-screen, pumped on self-righteousness.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
...Mike and Media Ace Gillian Boardman are going into their seventh hour interned in the Capitol building. It is an outrage!

INT. BEN'S OFFICE

Caxton gets higher and mightier.

CAXTON
Valentine Michael Smith is getting his first lesson in human rights, Federation-style. Go to Bulletin Board.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM

Working much harder than usual to remain calm, Dryden lowers himself into a seated position. A HEALTHY OLDER WOMAN and her young NEPHEW fish on the edge of a Wisconsin pier.

FISHERWOMAN
I need to use my 17 to say that if what Media is saying is even half-true, I'm ashamed to be an Earthling. And I thought the Federation to this point had been quite open minded...

A gang of ASIAN CIRCUS ACROBATS take over the screen.

ASIAN CIRCUS ACROBAT
I am Ling Po. My friends and I..

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DINER--DAY

A SEVERELY DEVOTED BEARDED FOLLOWER of Mike in a yellow raincoat turns from the Acrobats and pulls up a bullhorn.

ASIAN CIRCUS ACROBAT (SCREEN)
..will happily make the four hour journey from Beijing to D.C. to protest this...

DEVOTED BEARDED FOLLOWER
Followers, we have a location!

A roar rumbles up from the tent city that has sprouted up around the roadside diner. The Followers ecstatically shake into their raincoats and slap down their tents.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

Dryden mutes the image of a CANADIAN CURLING TEAM.

DRYDEN
The public can be made to understand. We have him declared insane. Get him up here and see for yourself--it will be simple..

FEMALE AFRICAN EXECUTIVE
We can't. He just went into conference with his counsel.

DOUGLAS
Counsel? Oh, no...

INT. HOLDING TANK--DAY

With a playful twang of music, Jubal enters in a long gunslinger coat. Anne, Dorcas, and Miriam follow him in. The laser beam bars of the holding tank buzz off. Everybody hugs.

MIKE
Hi, Jubal. I'm bad.

GILLIAN
So I guess it takes an alien coming down from Mars and being imprisoned by the government to get you out of the house.

JUBAL
What can I say? Every twelve years I like to go out for a little dinner and take in a show. I've been meaning to see Cats for the last 75 years. How is it?
(angry cut-off)
What were you two thinking coming here? Let me get this initialed, the plan was to walk up the Capitol steps--and then?

ANNE
It's such a terrible plan Jubal can't believe he didn't come up with it himself.

MIKE
I'm bad.

GILLIAN
What can they actually do to us?

JUBAL
Actually everything. Caxton is working the airwaves for us, but this is double plus ungood. Storming the Capitol they have you down for...

DORCAS
Next time you want to discover the world, Mike, I have one word for you. Europe. Nice. Laid back. Nobody works.

MIKE
(laughing)
Europe. Good wit, Dorcas.

MIRIAM
Uh, was that like, a laugh?

MIKE
Yes, Miriam. I grok the joke that is life. Grasshopper walks into a bar. Bartender says "Hey, we have a drink named after you." Grasshopper says, "You have a drink named Steve?"

JUBAL
(chuckling)
Kid, you have more aspects than a cat has hair. Welcome to the human race.

MIKE
Good to be here. On that subject, I know I've been sh-h-h about the Rodan corporation and Larkin Pioneer act stuff, but I've given some thought and I've come to some grokking.

JUBAL
Hit me..

INT. THE WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The stage is set. On one side of the table, a strangely casual Mike confers with his counsel with Anne decked out in her Fair Witness garb. On the other side, the executives of the World Federation is crowded together with their own Fair Witness. Gillian is detached in the doorway. Douglas solemnly stands.

DOUGLAS
I see both our Fair Witnesses are in place. Let's begin. Last night, the planet's Capitol was attacked. An incident of shocking implications, but I think if we all act like rational adults, we can clear up this matter. However, unlike the phone conversation heard around the world, this time I'll control..

JUBAL
Mr. Secretary-General. Let's not be confused whose hands are squeezing whose balls. Mike owns the Rodan corporation and he owns Mars. He's the king. You're the peasants. Have a seat.

EXT. - PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

Cabs and transports whine down from the sky onto the concrete of Pennsylvania Avenue. Raincoat wearing followers of Mike plow forth, commencing a parade to the steps of the Capitol.

INT. WORLD CONFERENCE ROOM

As Jubal voice-overs, the viewer drags across the pained, perspiring faces of the Federation. The Russian Exec cries.

JUBAL (V.O.)
I filled them in on everything we knew about Mike's new wealth and power and how we knew it. I never thought the sight of so much nervous flop sweat could be so beautiful. Just as it seemed the entire right side of the table would keel over completely, I dropped the bomb.

JUBAL (LIVE)
He doesn't want it. Mars, that is. He thinks Larkin is a joke.

The Executives crumple in drained happiness and relief.

MIKE
(cheeky)
Only you guys could come up with a way where somebody can "own" somebody else's planet. If the Elders could laugh, they surely would.

EXT. MARS SURFACE

Rocklike eyes bob up from the red Martian sand, taking in some rudimentary construction being done by astronaut workers.

MIKE (V.O.)
The Elders look upon your efforts to build the same way you would look at kids building a fort out of a refrigerator box in your backyard. Even better accurately, the same way you would look at an ant colony in a glass case on a classroom shelf.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM

Mike chuckles to himself.

MIKE
For the rulers of a planet, you people are lame.

JUBAL
Oh, and out of all those corporate billions Mike is heir to, all Mike wants is...What was that figure?

MIKE
3,143,700 and one credits.

JUBAL
This is where you say-- "Where's the catch?"

RUSSIAN EXEC
Well yes, where is it? The legendary crusader Jubal Harshaw doesn't charge into a room like a lion, only to nap like a kitty.

FEMALE AFRICAN EXECUTIVE
And really Harshaw, 3 million credit-dollars? The corporation spends more than that on the office Christmas party. Come on, you have to want more...

MIKE
No more. No catch. No corporation. No bogus ownership rights to a planet. I just want...a belt.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE--DAY

An even more awesome array of wheeless vans and transports sweep to the ground hatching their cargo of Mike worshippers.

INT. WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

An Identity Belt goes sliding across the ultra-suave table. Jubal snatches it up and connects it around Mike

ASIAN EXECUTIVE
I've accredited your belt with the aforementioned sum. Right down to that aforementioned dollar.

JUBAL
So you're committing to <u>this</u> world. What's the first thing you want to do?

MIKE
Change it. See ya..

Not childishly, but with compelling exuberance, Mike bolts upon the conference table, and off the end of it, to Gillian, still dazed in the doorway. He pulls her away...

DORCAS
Hope he knows what he's doing...

ANNE
Don't know about you, but I always wanted to own my own planet.

MIRIAM
Where did he get that number--3,143,701. What's the one for?

JUBAL
Something tells me we'll find out.

With the happy, exhausted sighs of winners of a 97 hour Monopoly game, the Execs watch the Poconos team head toward the door. Dryden sits away from this mirth.

FRENCH EXECUTIVE HENRI
Tres belle, I must say...

RUSSIAN EXEC
I lost count. How many bullets did we just dodge?

DOUGLAS
It's finally over. I haven't been this giddy since the Cubs took the series..

DRYDEN
Fools..Oh so what, we picked up some money and some real estate. Larkin and the Rodan corporation are minor issues compared to the potential danger that crowd-pleasing psychopath represents. He wants to change the world. Ask yourself: "Into what?" We know less than ever about VMS--and we just let him walk right out the door.

JUBAL
(pausing in doorway)
Hey, scary, all-knowing one--A frown is nothing but a smile upside down.

DOUGLAS
Yeah, Dryden, glee yourself. We live in new and exciting times like the first man on the moon...Columbus discovering America...

DRYDEN
How do you know Mike and his Martians are not Columbus and we're the pathetic Indians about to be made extinct. Never has someone so multidimesionally bizarre and disturbing had so much power. Just because I'm the "villain" here, doesn't mean I'm not right.

INT. CAPITOL LOBBY

Wired beyond belief, Mike huffs beneath the beautiful skylight and the puffy white clouds above. Gillian rushes up. Chants of "Mike, Mike, Mike" boom outside the front doors.

GILLIAN
How does it feel...

MIKE
On Mars, I always feel one way only. On Earth, many ways. Without yesterday's sadness, I can't have today's happiness. I feel..

Mike's body suddenly shudders and lurches up in pained, red-eyed levitation.

MIKE
No! Not! Now!

The skylight above violently shatters, showering shards atop the global mural on the lobby floor. Immediately released from telekinetic torture, Mike flutters back down.

GILLIAN
Mike...what...are you okay?

MIKE
They let me go. They know. They know I'm not one of them anymore. I'm one of you. Listen....

THE CROWD OUTSIDE
Mike, Mike, Mike...

MIKE
I used to think their call for a religion was silly. That was before I grokked. Before I laughed. Before I tasted the blood of my own birth. I've had a hell of a week. They want a religion? I'm still not overly completely sure I know what a religion is, but I'm going to give them one.

GILLIAN
You're not serious..What kind of a religion?

MIKE
It will not be one of faith. It will be one of certainty. Pain and sickness and hunger and fighting-- there's no need for <u>any</u> of it. I'm going to teach what I know, giving people my powers and confidence and happiness...

GILLIAN
But Mike, you have powers that no other person can have...

MIKE
Wrong. Powers everyone can have. I am not an alien. I am a human being. If I'd been born in Minnesota, I'd would've grown up to be an engineer with two tykes, house by the waterfall machine, plugged into a curling tournament. Instead..I was born on Mars. And on Mars, I was taught things they don't teach in Minnesota--reading minds, telekinesis, teleportation--I wasn't just given these powers--I wasn't blessed with them--I hunkered down as the only white Earth kid in my school and I learned...I grokked.

Gillian pleads as a barely listening Mike plucks a small and sharp black megaphone from the guard's station.

GILLIAN
Mike, you've been through a lot. Let's check into a hotel and just kick back...

MIKE
My Elders are going to give me a chance to shake things up as a human being. They might not have to vanish the core of the Earth after all..I'm going to make the best of both worlds, Gillian. Earth and Mars...Welcome to my religion.

The viewer follows Mike as he, in grand Lawrence of Zhivago-esque style, bashes through the front doors and out to the steps of the Capitol, before a sea of followers in yellow raincoats. Jubal and the gang drift up beside Gillian. They all take in this magnificent and ineffably eerie sight.

Mike raises his sharp black megaphone and wails to his brigade on the avenue. And to everyone else in the world.

MIKE
Hi. I think every one of you is God. I'm serious.

INT. MEDIA CENTER--DAY

Caxton and his staff imbibe Mike from the Center's screen.

MIKE (SCREEN)
That which groks is God. Every time a man decides to get up in the morning, he is God.

EXT. AFRICAN BONFIRE--NIGHT

African Tribespeople move from a bonfire to an outdoor screen.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Every time a woman bends down to kiss a child, she is God.

INT. CAB ON SOVIET STREET--NIGHT

A RUSSIAN CAB DRIVER rustles from a nap to watch Mike in his cab.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Everyone who makes the effort to grok-to grasp-to grapple--is God.

EXT. THE STREET--DAY

With all screens humming away, the heterogeneous citizens of the representative-of-many Street, watch in rapture.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Power is not outside oneself. It is inside. You grok. I grok. I needed the word. The word is God. Thou art God. I am God. All shaping and making and creating together.

INT. THE WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--DAY

The Executives settle back to the table with Maybe-Dryden-is-right worry.

MIKE (SCREEN)
"Oh God" "Thank God" "God only knows" "Goddamnit" "God help me" You're talking about you. Every time anybody says "God is punishing me"-- they are punishing themselves.

INT. THE FOSTERITE CHURCH AUDITORIUM--DAY

The formerly-Deacon-now-Bishop Blue and a highly unenthused congregation drearily look up to a screen in the chapel.

MIKE (SCREEN)
You've been treated like puppets by the government, the Media, and loud organizations like the Fosterites.

EXT. TOKYO MALL--NIGHT

Night at the Tokyo Mall. No one's shopping. All are watching.

MIKE (SCREEN)
But you are not Puppets. You are Puppeteers.

INT. THE TYPICALLY SUBURBAN HOUSE--DAY

The prototypical Suburban Family and their requisite canine watch from the breakfast table.

MIKE (SCREEN)
The Apocalypse didn't happen when it was supposed to. Sorry, looks like you're going to have to live. I have recently grokked that life is like the worst thing that can happen to you--but hey, that's what's so fun about it.

INT. CLASSROOM

Unblinking Kids of every type watch a classroom screen.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Live for today. Love one another. You are the controller of your own destiny. Be the best you can be.

EXT. THE CAPITOL STEPS

The viewer eases back from Mike's smiling face.

MIKE
I know, to you, these are silly cliches...but hey, I just got here and they all sound pretty good to me.

Mike flings the megaphone into the air as the sea of raincoats go insane. Gillian, Jubal, and gang back away, a little freaked out.

INT. A STARK ROOM OF BUSINESS--DAY

Wearing a headset, Mike plugs and unplugs from a circle of strange yet familiar machines that we will just call computers.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Out of the 3,140,701 credit Federation allowance, Mike put 3,140,700 of it into a wide range of stocks. In two days, he made nine times the investment.

EXT. AN AFRICAN PLAIN--DAY

On an African plain, a GAMESHOWESQUE GUY and an AFRICAN HOSTESS pull balls from a lottery bubble, set up in the sand.

JUBAL (V.O.)
With the remaining credit from the Federation allowance, Mike bought a ticket in the world lottery. He had determined a pattern, that only a Martian could pick up on, from previous winning numbers.

INT. MIKE SITTING AT A LUNCHEON COUNTER

Watching the draw on a TV above, Mike, casually eating pistachios, looks over to his ticket.

MIKE
Needless to say, he won. Since everyone in the world could participate in the lottery and since no one had won the week before, the pot was 308 million dollars.

He gives a very cute, brief clap for himself.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MAIN FOSTERITE CHURCH--DAY

Led by Mike, raincoated followers walk up familiar stairs.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike wanted the first religon that did not bog down in the constant need to make money. It was time to buy a church.

Mike and his followers are revealed to be in front of the main Fosterite church. Its massive F-cross is toppled by a construction crew..

INT. THE ARCADE AREA--DAY

The arcade area is being demolished. Mike and his followers are throwing their raincoats in a pile, rolling up their sleeves, and rebuilding in harmony. A group of FOSTERITES lug the case carrying the dead John Foster. They almost drop it.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike liked the poetry of returning to a place of lost innocence. The new mood of the planet was not fun for the Fosterites. It was Mike's turn..

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM--DAY

The viewer's viewpoint sweeps across an enthusiastic audience in the old Fosterite chapel. Mike emerges from smoke, holding a mike.

MIKE
Did you hear the one about the insomniac-agnostic-dyslexic? He stayed up all night wondering whether there really is a Dog...
(post-audience glee)
Forgive me, I've lived most of my life without a sense of humor. My mind is playing catch up.

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM--SUBSEQUENT IMAGES

Jubal's voiceover returns for a montage of Mike working the crowd like a Vegas showman--He good-naturedly ribs an audience member, changing his own hair color to match the member's--He dances atop two balls resembling Earth and Mars--He plays a sax in a Star Trek uniform with fake antennaes.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike had learned from the Fosterites' mistakes. He had learned from his bad carnival act. His act was the perfect combination of Consummate Entertainer and Sweet ET. Mike knew we liked our medicine wrapped in a piece of candy.

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM--FINALE

In "Glad-we-could-have-this-time-together" mode, Mike speaks in a spotlight.

MIKE
Why do you call the moon in your sky "The Moon." I mean, every planet has got moons--We had a couple back home-- not one of them called "The Moon." I'm being silly...The Future is over and I'm proof. You always said someone coming down from another planet would happen in the future. It happened in the present. With every problem you have, you are led to believe it will be resolved in "The Fu-ture." Why wait?
(pointing to brain)
The final frontier is right here. I'm not talking about revolution. I'm talking about evolution. You've taken the first step into the first circle. Come to circle 2. Goodnight.

Consciously undramatic, to great applause, Mike simply exits through a wooden door. The viewer's viewpoint slowly moves into the darkness within the open door.

JUBAL (V.O.)
That was the fun part. Most religions ask one to sit back politely and pay the dues. Mike's religion had no use for your money, even less for your passivity. For some, the next circle was to be a spiritual awakening of great magnitude..

EXT. THE STAIRS LEADING TO THE CHURCH--DAY

The viewer sees a parade of ANGRY EX-FOLLOWERS retreat down the church stairs.

JUBAL (V.O.)
But for most, it was a real pain in the ass. The breezy delight of bopping around in raincoats, sharing water, had been replaced by something much more demanding.

INT. A SMALL FOSTERITE CHURCH--NIGHT

Bishop Blue, now in a gold uniform, holds his arms out to the entering viewer.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Many of the Rejects went as far as running to the diseased bosom of the new Fosterites. Beneath the universal adulation for Valentine Michael Smith, a grumbling could be heard...

INT. THE MEDIA CENTER--NIGHT

Back snug in his headset, Ben Caxton addresses his staff.

CAXTON
Just how much do we know about the Man from Mars? It's been a year since VMS ran out on the Capitol steps. Mikey starts a religion called "The Religion." Says he wants to turn us all into happy-happy Einsteins possessing magical powers...

FEMALE EDITOR SHEILA
This guy thinks he's God.

CAXTON
Oh no, he thinks we're all God. I'm God. You're God. Damn, he even thinks Stanley is God.
(gets a laugh)
Am I the only one having a hard time grokking all this? I'm a journalist, which means people are only likable to me when they are attacking other people--I like Mike when he's giving it to the Fosterites and the WF--But once people start claiming to know "the real truth" themselves--fuck 'em. Let's get some Kryptonite on this alien...

STANLEY
Kryptonite?

CAXTON
You know, "Superman?" Doesn't anybody read anymore?

FEMALE EDITOR SHEILA
Chief, the only way to nail this saga is by infiltration.

CAXTON
Pretend I'm not stupid. My Ace is in place...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CHURCH--DAY/NIGHT

Of course, cut to Gillian Boardman ascending the staircase to the church. She activates a recording device beneath her blouse. She walks through the church's foreboding doors.

The viewer's viewpoint continues to hold on the doors. Without being given a clue to what is going on inside, THE SUN ELLIPTICALLY DIVES TO A QUICK SUNSET.

A very traumatized Gillian stumbles back out the door. She falls to her knees, fumbling to retrieve her hidden recorder.

THE VOICE OF MIKE (RECORDER)
Gillian, don't try to tape us. Just come back when you are truly ready..

EXT. BEFORE JUBAL'S ESTATE

Gillian wearily hatches from a Transport landing before Jubal's estate. Jubal hustles from the house with an old double-barrel shotgun.

JUBAL
I promised I'd shoot the next person to land on my rosebushes.

GILLIAN
I landed on the grass.

JUBAL
Go up and try again.

Gillian's smile contorts into a grimace of tears. Jubal hugs her.

JUBAL
You went to the church, didn't you?

INT. HALLWAY OF THE CHURCH--FLASHBACK--DAY

Massive doors swinging closed behind her, Gillian dorothys down a pristine Oz-like hallway--water elegantly streams down the walls. Miriam angelically comes before her, wearing a white wisp of nothing. She leads Gillian by the hand.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
It was unsettling. Everything seemed so casual-- but it was as coordinated as a ballerina's muscles. Like each move had been planned by a master choreographer...

In Gillian's intoxicated POV, the viewer scans to BARELY DRESSED MALE AND FEMALE DISCIPLES conversing and caressing, stopping to cup and share water from the streaming wall.

INT. LEARNING AREAS--FLASHBACK--DAY

Visitor Gillian peers through a window. Inside, adults of every type shout together Martian screeching sounds. Anne, moves down the aisle, like a happy kindergarten teacher.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
The basement of the church is like a souped-up language lab where the followers learn Martian and the power it unlocks, the way it makes the mind work in different patterns.

Gillian scans over to another room where CONCENTRATING DISCIPLES are making comically miscellaneous objects, like blenders, disappear.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
According to Anne, to try to teach goodies like telepathy and telekinesis in English would be like explaining a sunset to a blind man. Prayer in this "church" is Pure Education-Pure Communication.

EXT. JUBAL'S BACKYARD AREA--DAY

Jubal and Gillian move into the backyard. The pool is drained. An air of sadness hangs over the barren grounds.

GILLIAN
It's pure insanity is what it is. All these shiny, happy people gliding around in negligees, slurping water from the wallpaper.

JUBAL
Always said, a saint can stir up twice as much trouble as a scoundrel...Took my Assistants and even that hick Duke, who was the only one who knew how anything ran in this dump. Making toast has become a profound mystery...

GILLIAN
I can't believe Mike believes he can rewire people's way of thinking..

JUBAL
What's not to believe? The world is flat--There's no such thing as life on other planets. There's a long history of schmucks who thought they knew the exact dimensions of the realm of possibility. I don't want to be one of them...Are you going to tell me what really happened now?

INT. CHURCH CHAPEL AREA FLASHBACK

Gillian sneaks from Miriam and into the empty chapel area. She creeps to the familiar wooden door behind the stage.

GILLIAN (V.O.)
What do you mean?

JUBAL (V.O.)
There's something else. Isn't there?

INT. MIKE'S CHAMBERS--FLASHBACK--NIGHT

The room that used to be the Fosterite Sanctum has been given a Martian-red paint job. Gillian tiptoes behind a pillar, adjusting her recording device. She peers out to see Anne pacing before an unusual chair--its back to the viewer.

MIKE (O.S.)
Oh Anne, sell our Megacorp stocks. I feel a scandal at their company next week..

ANNE
Already done. Grokked the same thing this morning.

MIKE
Thou art so God--Gillian, I'm sorry, did you have a question?

The pillar Gillian hides behind rises into the ceiling. Mike spins the chair and bounces up. He toys with some machines.

GILLIAN
Uh, somebody told me the ladies room was back...

MIKE
Gillian, one in a billion..So good to see you. Excuse the tie, I have to do a First Circle Show for some visiting potentials.

Suddenly, both Mike and Anne burst into laughter.

MIKE
Who's joke was that?

ANNE
Jim Shafer in the basement.

MIKE
Good one...

GILLIAN
Uh, yeah. You've sent a lot of unhappy people out of here, feeling disgruntled about being weeded out...like, like weeds.

MIKE
The people we sent away came to the Religion for the bumper stickers. They did not want a school, they wanted a spa. Tell people their life will change if they do a certain diet or a certain drug, they get happy. Tell them they have to become more intelligent and they freak out..

GILLIAN
I guess I'm just worried. People like their heroes sweet and simple and you're becoming really complicated. Media puts every celebrity, politician, and athlete through a five step program--Number One, Discovery. Number Two, Hype. Number Three, Worship. Number Four, Skepticism. You're in Number Four, Mike. You have to scale back, calm down. Number Five is Destruction. You think you can change the world, but I've been on this world a lot longer than you have. I know better.

MIKE
No Gillian. You just know worse.

Mike opens his eyes wide, looking off. Miriam walks in, rubbing her temple. She hands him a glass of water. Sexual tension is in the air. Everyone is sweating.

MIRIAM
Ouch...no need to think so loud.

MIKE
Thank you, Miriam.

MIRIAM
(reading him)
A circle three chain?..There's no time...

ANNE
We're confusing Gillian...

GILLIAN
A circle three chain? What's--the third circle deals with sexuality, doesn't it?

MIKE
Third circle--brain of Mars, body of Earth-- all coming together..I have known from the day I was born of the need for better sexuality/spirituality for I was born in a bloodbath of adultery, jealousy, and murder..

ANNE
It's okay, Mike. Relax...

Mike and Anne launch into an engulfing kiss, levitating into the air. Clothes disappearing, Miriam floats to join them, all obscured by a sparkling fog. Gillian quivers away.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY--FLASHBACK--DUSK

Couples are in passionate embrace against the liquid wall. Gillian storms the sexual obstacle course. Breaking into a dash, she slams out the spooky double-doors.

EXT. JUBAL'S POOLSIDE--DAY

Rounding the house, Gillian sighs a finish.

GILLIAN
..I had never felt so humiliated in my life.

JUBAL
Of course you have. What happened to you was the latest variation of not being able to keep up with the cooler kids in school.

GILLIAN
Don't tell me I'm just another jealous girlfriend.

JUBAL
Sexuality is a strange thing. We got this code between men and women that says, "Don't do this" and "Never think about that"--the result? Repression, depression, obsession, broken homes, twisted children...and furtive passes at country club dances, degrading to both man and woman whether consumated or not. Not to mention jealousy and murder on a spaceship. The Man from Mars has figured out the problem's not how to obey the code, but the code itself. Bless him.

GILLIAN
Jubal, have you thought about writing a real book lately?

JUBAL
Hush. I pay too much attention to the outside world as it is. Your plug or mine?

Jubal plugs in a screen on the side of the house. A commercial for ROOKIE MOON COP ends and a GIRL ON A BEACH comes on.

GIRL ON A BEACH (SCREEN)
Oh God,..I can't believe I got through. I just want to use my seventeen sekkies to say that I thought the Man from Mars used to be pretty cute and amusing, but now, he's spooky...

A RUSSIAN FACTORY WORKER stops welding something strange.

RUSSIAN FACTORY WORKER
This..this elitist, who does he think he is, saying our planet can be improved? What gives him right?

Next up is Bishop Blue at the pulpit in his Fosterite gold

BLUE (SCREEN)
The New Fosterites refuse to preach hate against our fellow man--But that heathen teaching our kids Martian is not our fellow man. Mike wants to paint the planet red as Mars.

JUBAL
(unplugging)
Did the word "heathen" really make it to another century?

EXT. BEFORE JUBAL'S ESTATE--DUSK

Jubal escorts Gillian out to the front of his home.

JUBAL
You're going back there. Back to the church. You want a change, Gillian, and you know Change is something more than a hairstyle or a tax cut.

GILLIAN
I just don't..I have to talk Caxton about all this. He must be wondering...

JUBAL
Drop me a line about this week's odds on the death of Earth.

GILLIAN
I'll find out. I guess I'm going to find out a lot of things.

Gillian kisses Jubal on the cheek and skedaddles into a Taxi.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE--DAY

A shiny black pair of shoes sneer down upon Caxton's patch of grass, painfully crushing the blades. Dryden is revealed.

DRYDEN
The roof. Immediately.

EXT. THE ROOF--DUSK

Dryden stands in a stark pose at the edge, overlooking ILM traffic breezing the dusk of D.C. Caxton strides out--double-taking at the sight of Bishop Blue.

CAXTON
What is it, Dryden? And what is he-- what are you doing here?

BLUE
Hell if I know, Media Vampire.

DRYDEN
The Alien must die.

CAXTON
What?

Dryden turns around and paces the roof.

DRYDEN
Never thought I'd be saying such words-- "The Alien must Die." Mike Smith is the great destabilizing force of our century. Not just at the stock market-- but in the minds and souls of too many Earthlings.

BLUE
You got that right. That Martian-raised liberal..

DRYDEN
Silence. I prefer putting up with Mr. Blue here for the Federation only has use for religions that inspire fear. A palpable existence of God's wrath keeps people in line. Mike's religion leads people to think they can get away with things. Everything. The world has a finite capacity for happiness and intelligence. That's why most people who wanted to be part of Mike's cult got sent home defeated and angry. Every man is God, but I guess some people are more God than others. You see, there is no such thing as Utopia, only anarchy. The Alien..

CAXTON
...must die. Dryden, you do a great Doomsday thing and I won't lie, I'm not exactly Mikey's biggest fan either. But what makes you think Media wants in on your extermination plan?

DRYDEN
I've been waiting for the perfect time for this. Oblige me..This isn't virtual, it's reality.

Douglas holds out two pairs of goggles. Caxton and Blue warily tug them on.

INT. FILM IN THE GOGGLES

The fabled image of Mike dematerializing Executive Berquist unfolds within the goggles.

INT. MEDIA CENTER--OUTSIDE CAXTON'S OFFICE--DAY

Caxton's co-workers look upward.

FEMALE EDITOR SHEILA
What's going on up there?

STANLEY
Did anyone see where I put my Evil Martian Cannibalism story?

EXT. THE ROOF--DUSK

Unnerved, Caxton and Bishop Blue tear off the goggles. Caxton trys to gain composure.

CAXTON
It could be construed as self-defense.

DRYDEN
There have been others...Sixteen Anxiety Disposal Officers never heard from again. "Self-defense?" Perhaps, but..

BLUE
How can you corn dogs be so tranquil! Did you see--that was genuine sci-fi terror! That space bastard...he has the ability to...he combusted Bishop Digby, god-dammit. He was the last one with him and I knew...I knew he was the real evil.

CAXTON
(needling Blue)
Wait, are you saying the Bishop didn't spontaneously rise to heaven.

DRYDEN
You had Gillian Boardman infiltrate the church...

CAXTON
(quieted)
Yes. I haven't heard from her yet; little worried actually..

DRYDEN
She's a very special person to you. Good friends with Mr. Smith, as well, am I right? Has she ever divulged anything too spicy for pluggable broadcast? Has she ever seemed strange?

INT. MEDIA CENTER FLASHBACK--NIGHT

In a Caxton POV flashback, Gillian suspiciously tosses her recording device into her attache.

EXT. THE ROOF--DUSK

Back in the present, Caxton's eyes flicker to Dryden.

CAXTON
Perhaps...

BLUE
Who cares about that nicotine toking bitch? We gotta rivet this creature to the outhouse door before he marshals up his buddies back home for an attack...Dryden, aren't you worried about getting erased-Martian-style like your pal?

DRYDEN
Ben here, and I, happen to be water brothers of Mr. Smith. From what I've read in reconnaisance, Mike would not dare harm a water brother.

BLUE
How peachy for you two.

CAXTON
(slowly losing mind)
Disappearing Bishops. Mystic rules of water brotherhood. Killing aliens before they attack Earth--this is not a conversation I want to be having. All this Science Non-Fiction bullshit..

DRYDEN
Without my prompting, Media has done an excellent job at chipping away at Mike's image and popularity.

CAXTON
Hey, what we are doing is good, sound journalism.

DRYDEN
(a smile)
Well then, keep up the good sound journalism. I cannot underestimate the importance of this quasi-messiah dying at his lowest point of popularity. His forthcoming assasination should be, must be, and will be, something every Earthling will want. The Alien must die. Bishop, need a lift?

BLUE
Sure, you going uptown?

Dryden and Blue bend into a sleek, black, Transport that vipers into the air. Caxton lowers into a sit at the edge.

EXT. AN ISLAND BEACH--DAY

Also sitting, A LONE CHILD, before a gentle tide, watches an INDIGNANT MIDWESTERN COUPLE on an island screen.

MIDWESTERN WIFE (SCREEN)
He was as adorable as a kitten's ear and that opening service Mike did was a real treat, but..

MIDWESTERN HUSBAND (SCREEN)
They wouldn't let us join the Religion! The snobs said we had to learn and "grok" all this crud.

EXT. THE STREET--NIGHT

Gillian walks down the street before the line of screens.

MIDWESTERN HUSBAND (SCREEN)
We're going back to the Fosterites. There you just plunk down your money then follow the rules.

MIDWESTERN WIFE (SCREEN)
And I just love their new uniforms..

Stanley next comes with charts marked CANNIBALISM.

STANLEY (SCREEN)
Yes, cannibalism. The truth may be hard to swallow, but Martians have a ritual of devouring their dead. When is Valentine Michael Smith going to try and shove this ritual down our throats..

Gillian moves ahead of the screen, shaking her head.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE--NIGHT

Gillian rushes into Caxton's office. Something is off.

GILLIAN
It's a sick religion that plays on people's minds. We have to stop it. The one good thing to come out of that disgusting trip is that I realize now where I belong..

Gillian and Ben plunge into each other's arms and deeply, deeply kiss. A FEMALE SECRETARY VOICE cuts in..

SECRETARY VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Caxton, Gillian Boardman is on her way in...

BACK TO REALITY

Caxton pulls off a Virtual Helmet, the previous scene a created fantasy. Caxton sighs with self-contempt. Gillian enters for real. They go in and out of a non-romantic hug.

CAXTON
I was really worried. You went in there and..

GILLIAN
Ben, I'm going back. And I'm leaving my recording devices here. Mike has more to offer me than cheap cannibalism stories.. I wish I could explain more..

Quaking, Caxton pulls out and slams down her attache case.

CAXTON
I went through your apartment, through this case, through the disc! When were you going to tell me our planet is about to be destroyed? I don't know how much this take a chunk out of the core of the earth crap is on the level...

GILLIAN
That conversation happened a long time ago! Mike's way of thinking-- it's improving the way we are. The Elders will take notice and they'll stop thinking in terms of vanquishing the planet.

CAXTON
Oh, "the Elders will take notice." I'm sorry I flew off the handle there. I didn't know the Elders were taking notice. You're insane! I've seen his respect for human life! I saw him kill Executive Berquist. Trust me, this guy's getting shipped to the nearest black hole!

GILLIAN
He was protecting me! All this self-righteous angry energy--for what?...What do you have against someone trying to make change and create happiness? You're more afraid of that than any telekinetic first strike from Mars.

Gillian reaches to Ben's helmet and pulls out a cartridge.

GILLIAN
What's on here. You and me doing it?

CAXTON
Uh no, it's something more than that..

GILLIAN
No, Ben, it's something less.

CAXTON
Come back. I'll double your credits. Me and you used to make fun of queasy cultists like this Smith guy-- he's the worst thing to come out of the sky since the Colorado Meteor. He's dangerous! He's doomed! I love you, all right, I love you. I know you already know it and I know I'm pathetic and surly about it, but that's what love is! It's painful. It's having to watch your daydreams with headgear because you're too afraid to live them out! So what? We're not Gods! We're not even Angels! The free love of thuh Church of thuh Religion is shit! Free isn't worth anything! Come back.

Gillian rises, utterly placid, allowing Caxton a moment to lay in his own juices.

GILLIAN
Once you've taken a stand, it's hard to go back to journalism. Us Earthlings explored space--We cured AIDS--We cured the Colorado Meteor Plague--we developed environmental filters to ameliorate ozone damage-- we have come together to achieve the most amazing things--yet when it comes to spirtuality and sexuality, we remain baffled, bruised, stupid, and cruel. It took the first true outsider in the entire history of our planet's existence about a week to realize our foolishness. I talk to you and I don't know if us locals will ever quite grok the truth. Goodbye, Caxton.

CAXTON
(ulterior vibes)
Wait...aren't you going to take your lucky bag?

GILLIAN
Guess I'm going to need some luck.

The viewer's tight loitering over the attache case causes suspicion. Gillian exits, oblivious that anything could be wrong. With a slight tremble, Caxton pulls on his headset..

CAXTON
Run it....run the whole package.

EXT. SPACE

The earlier-seen world-wide Satellite 17 again drifts into view. Its red light flashes on.

EXT. GREEK RUINS--DAY

Tourists at a Greek ruin. About to be traumatized.

VOICE OF MEDIA
Hello. This is Media. The Focus of the Now is this: The shocking truth of the Man from Mars.

EXT. AN AIR BILLBOARD

A tape of Caxton shines upon a billboard dangling in the sky. Various flying vehicles putter past it.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Like the rest of you billions, I thought I had made a friend in Valentine Michael Smith. Until now.

EXT. THE STREET--DUSK

Gillian ambles back the other way down the street.

CAXTON (SCREEN)
Your eyes will see a murder. Your ears will hear something even more terrifying.

MIKE'S VOICE
"The decision of whether we should destroy this third planet.."

All bodies swarm around the screens as the Death of Berquist flickers into history. It keeps repeating itself. Gillian looks away as the gasps begin. She treads off, eyes at her feet. She breaks into a desperate run.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CHURCH--NIGHT

A transport departing into the night behind her, a drained, but tingling, Gillian approaches the tall double doors.

INT. CHURCH CHAPEL--NIGHT

Quite chipper, Mike is teaching a pack of CUTE-AS-BUTTON KIDS a Tai-chi-type movement along with a Martian phrase.

Attache case school-girlishly bouncing off her knees in a two-handed grip, Gillian quivers forward, tear eeking down her cheek. The children stop their exercises. Mike looks up to his visitor, his face a poignant blank.

GILLIAN
I'm sorry...The way I ran out..

MIKE
Kyle. B-17.

A child presses a button on the pulpit. The beautiful swing music that Mike and Gillian had earlier danced to comes on.

MIKE
The human mind allows itself to be clouded by such silliness. Melody of a song. Passage from a book. Funny scene in a movie. It is a weakness--a weakness that is a strength. How I love this song...and the person it calls up for grokking. After you left, they had to keep me from destructing myself..

GILLIAN
I want to learn your ways, but..what you guys do seems impossible. Miracles.

MIKE
What we do with our minds are not miracles, any more than radio or computers are miracles. Do you grok "electricity?"

GILLIAN
Actually not really...

Mike and Gillian drift into a dance mode.

MIKE
But you know that you could if you took the time and the energy to learn the language of electronics. It's the same with us.

GILLIAN
I don't know, sometimes I think I liked you better when you didn't know how to tie your shoes.
(a sad beat)
Have you plugged in?

MIKE
Yes, Gillian. I did not realize that device humming in the hospital hallway would be later tracked down and be instrumental in causing my downfall..
(laughing)
but hey, I'm only human.

GILLIAN
The laugh still needs help... When the Elders see all this rage, they're going to annihilate the planet, aren't they?

MIKE
The Elders probably <u>will</u> decide to beautify Earth into nothingness, but not for a while.

GILLIAN
What's "a while" in Martian?

MIKE
An utter minimum of 500 years. Probably closer to five thousand years. The Elders never hurry. They like to think things out.

GILLIAN
Five thousand years! And here I am worried that I'll never have children or learn to scuba dive...500 years utter minimum!

MIKE
Sh-h-h. Sometimes it's better to just dance...How I never want to stop this moment...

Mike and Gillian melt into a sweet kiss.

GILLIAN
Then don't.

MIKE
It's just that there's a very powerful explosive device in your attache case.

GILLIAN
What?

Mike lays the case on the pulpit as the children gather round. He opens it and tears up a false bottom, revealing a network of wires with a digital clock reading 00:30..00:29..

MIKE
It's better this way..

GILLIAN
Better what way? What does that mean--It's a bomb, Mike!...Tell me you're grokking wrongness...

MIKE
This church is already choked with experiences. It is a diary with the pages filled up.

Mike casually puts on a leather jacket and a cool pair of sunglasses. The bomb clock reads 00:10...00:09..

GILLIAN
You have to do something..

MIKE
Take my hand, my dear...

Gillian launches her hand to Mike. The children grab each others.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY

Men and Women in the hallway latch on to each other.

THE BOMB

goes to 00:02...00:01....

EXT. WAY OUTSIDE THE CHURCH--NIGHT

The Church erupts in a vast, terrifying explosion.

Connie, a Beautiful Gillian Wanna-be, strides before this fiery image holding a cute microphone.

CONNIE
As you can see in the background, the saga of the Man from Mars--which began as Hero and turned to Villain-- has come to a probable end.

INT. JUBAL'S HOME--DAY

Connie continues her perky spiel on the withered set of Jubal's study.

CONNIE (SCREEN)
This classic live moment in history is brought to you by General Conversational Implants. Just stick one in your ear and the piped-in info will make you an instant expert in Pop Culture, Current events, or Sports Trivia. I'm wearing one now.

Jubal rips out his plug and staggers out of the study in sadness and rage. Overcome, he crumples to a sitting position on the house's grand staircase.

Suddenly, with eerie comfort and ease, Followers of Mike, including Anne and Miriam, materialize all around Jubal at every place in the house, above and below him. Mike and Gillian quaver into reality before him on the staircase.

Everyone lets off a happy sigh, wiping the familiar pink substance from their eyes. Gushing the stuff, Gillian turns from this moment of triumph and vomits over the banister.

EXT. THE BACKYARD--NIGHT

Another batch of followers materialize in the backyard, immediately seeming to form an outdoor cocktail party.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD--NIGHT

More followers, most notably a commanding Duke, abracadabra into the front yard. These followers have brought tools and lumber with them. They begin constructing something interesting.

INT. THE STAIRCASE--NIGHT

Mike gives the retching Gillian a tender pat. For once, Jubal is at a gasping loss for words.

JUBAL
Mike, you...wha...

MIKE
Hello, Jubal. We will have an intense conversation later. Which way to the roof again? I have to make a call...

Not waiting for an answer, Mike runs off. Gillian rises to speak, but then bolts, holding her mouth. She passes Anne, serenely coming down the stairs.

ANNE
Guess we should have phoned ahead. Things are happening a little quickly for my taste. Come..

EXT. THE BACKYARD--NIGHT

A still pixilated Jubal is led by Anne into the backyard. A baby floats from a man to a woman. A Man gives a Woman a massage from a distance. Slowly, with tingling glances, the followers start to notice Jubal. A Woman floating up a tray of veggies with her mind, scoping Jubal, lets the tray drop.

JUBAL
Something I said? People are looking at me like I'm the Principal...

ANNE
Maybe if you ever wheeled your lazy butt out of here, you'd realize what an influence you've been. Mike considers you a tradition of the Church.

JUBAL
This shouldn't have to happen to an atheist. I think I'm going to go up and kneel next to Gillian.

A giddy, robed Miriam rushes up to hug Jubal.

JUBAL
Miriam, will you tell these people to knock it off? The first one to treat me with respect has to stay after school.

MIRIAM
You got everybody so tamed...

Ever-lugging a toolbox, newly-formed hunk Duke thwaps Jubal on the back.

DUKE
Heck, it's a Saturday night. Usually we're sharing water and growing closer with anything that moves...

JUBAL
Well, I'll try to remain very still. So what's going on, you traitors?..I see the church blow up live on screen, then suddenly you're coming over for a barbecue..

MIRIAM
You can do anything if you put your mind to it. Teleportation, strangely enough, is actually not as difficult as telekinesis.

JUBAL
(smart-ass)
But then hey, what is?

ANNE
During the grand move, many members were sent off to our other branches. Only select dozens are here for the show. How's it coming out there, Duke?

DUKE
The building is going well, but we're not going to have time to paint before showtime...

JUBAL
Showtime? The show? What are you children up to?

ANNE
Jubal. Waiting is a goodness.

INT. THE ROOF OF JUBAL'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Mike rises up from a beeping device he has set up on the roof. In leather jacket, he looks out to the mountains in the moonlight, a different person from when he earlier stared to the Poconos. Tears well. He opens and eats a pistachio.

INT. THE FEDERATION CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Dryden is suavely barking to fellow Execs as Media coverage of the Church destruction unfolds on-screen.

DRYDEN
Priority One is getting some leakage over to Media about the Church destruction. Our computers have created evidence that it was all a mighty suicide ritual.

CONNIE (SCREEN)
...We just got a report on casualties from the Fire Marshall..."Zero." Repeat, in a rather perplexing turn of events, there are no bodies in the wreckage..

DRYDEN
It is imperative that this Religion dies in shame, so we can get some peace around here...what did that crazy bitch just say up there?

FRENCH EXEC HENRI
No bodies...

The Asian Executive careens into the room.

ASIAN EXECUTIVE
Executive Dryden...

DRYDEN
They were supposed to be there! Dead! ..

ASIAN EXECUTIVE
Sir, it's juicy...Anxiety Disposal has picked up an amazingly strong homing signal from an address in the Poconos.

DRYDEN
Harshaw...I'll be at Mission Control. Mobilize in the name of all that is Earth.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN--NIGHT APPROACHING DAWN

With foreman Duke in charge, the lumber-banging on the front lawn is taking shape--the form of a scaffolding/stage.

INT. THE HOUSE--NIGHT APPROACHING DAWN

Jubal stares out his front window, soberly contemplating the developing Stage. Dorcas joins him.

JUBAL
Dorcas! It's good to see your pretty--handsome face.

DORCAS
I just flew in from Europe. The normal way. I'm still an egg when it comes to transatlantic teleportation.

JUBAL
I have to ask--when one of these wild third circle cermonies goes down, do you share with men or women?

DORCAS
I share with...

A MALE FOLLOWER comes up holding a tuxedo on a hanger.

MALE FOLLOWER
Got Mike's tuxedo.

DORCAS
Hang it in the closet outside the library..It's almost sunrise, Jubal. I need to brief the other branches about what is about to happen.
(heading off)
Oh, to answer your question, I share with whoever feels right. See you at the show.

Jubal's attention turns to Dr. Nelson, holding materials.

JUBAL
Doctor Nelson, I presume? What are you around here? Staff physician?

DR. NELSON
Try "medical student." I've learned that medicine isn't necessary. See you at the show...

JUBAL
Wait, about this show..

She hurries off. Jubal drifts to a TSV set in a corner. It shows a demonstration with ugly picket signs and burning Mike effigies.

VOICE OF MEDIA (SCREEN)
As anti-Mike demonstrations continue, Executive Dryden has announced that the Anxiety Disposal Force has pinpointed Mike's new location...

DOUGLAS (O.S.)
Dryden...Asshole never did learn how to relax...

A vigorous Joseph Douglas sidles up to Jubal in a robe.

JUBAL
Douglas! You gave up being Secretary-General to hang out with these loons...

DOUGLAS
What can I say, some things are more important than running the government of the entire planet.
(post-chuckle)
I had one of those new incurable diseases. Mike taught me to control my own body. I am alive...and I know it's a cliche, but I've fallen in love with my wife--What a fucking religion, huh? See you at the show!

JUBAL
Wouldn't miss it.

Douglas jollys off with a glorious woman his age. Jubal lets off an amused snort. He sees a lone pistachio nut roll down the staircase. Captured by a feeling, Jubal continues up the stairs. To the creaked-open library door.

INT. THE LIBRARY--DAWN

Jubal treads softly into the library. Mike is curled in his death-white fetal position in a mind-boggling sea of pistachio shells on the carpet. An ashen Gillian rises up from a couch.

JUBAL
Gillian...feeling better?

GILLIAN
If Mike ever asks you to come some place with him, tell him you'll meet him there.
(toward Mike)
These people--they think he's a Messiah..

JUBAL
How do you know he isn't?

Gillian and Jubal retreat from Mike to the library furniture.

GILLIAN
Dryden and company think he's the Anti-Christ...

JUBAL
How do you know he isn't?

GILLIAN
As long as there is authority, there will be people who defy authority. And as long as there are people who defy authority, there will be people who are scared-to-the-point-of-hatred of people who defy authority.

Mike freshly bounds before the pair in his cool jacket. The sun is rising up through the windows of the library.

MIKE
But I don't defy authority--Hi Jubal--I'm saying authority does not exist. Brother Dryden understands this-- it's why he wants to scorch my butt. I'm saying what authority does exist is only in every one of us. I must grok and decide and act myself alone. And so must you...and so must each self. Thou art God.

JUBAL
I don't accept the nomination.

MIKE
You can't refuse it. Thou art God and I am God and all that groks is God, and I am all that I have ever been

Mike pauses to take a glass of water from a blithely entering and exiting Miriam. He launches back into the process of eating from a vast bowl of pistachios, flooring the shells.

MIKE
Thanks, Miriam. By the way, get everyone inside and away from the windows.
(back to tirade)
I tried to smuggle these ideas of mine into the planet dressed up as a religion and con the people into tasting it by appealing to their desire to be entertained.

GILLIAN
Mike, sorry to interrupt, but I keep thinking. You said you could never make Dryden "go away" because you can't do that to a water brother. But you are his water brother and look at the evil way he's treating you.

MIKE
Exec Dryden is bad water brother.

JUBAL
Gillian's asking what happens to bad water brothers?

MIKE
Intriguesting...Very American question. No "bad water brothers" back home--do not have the concept. But if I had to guess, with the potential of an eventual grokking, I would think a water brother shares the pain he causes.

GILLIAN
What does that mean?

MIKE
We'll find out in about twenty minutes.

JUBAL
What does that mean?

MIKE
They're here.

EXT. APPROACHING THE HARSHAW ESTATE. BY AIR--DAWN

The viewer is thrusted into the epic sight of choppers and military transports charging down upon the happy home.

INT. LIBRARY--DAY

Mike kicks into bunker performance mode.

MIKE
Men and Women of Earth, what happens to the stock market when all those of the Religion know which way a stock will move--and the brokers don't. Any of the disciplined can make any amount of money at anything-- real estate, bonds, commodities, horse races, blackjack-- when competing with the half-awake.

EXT. THE ROOF

A military transport screams to a landing upon the roof by the still beeping beacon that led them there. A pack of COMMANDOS, cracking out serious artillery, roar from the transport to a position at the edge.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM

Unfazed by the approaching threat, Mike continues to buzz.

MIKE
Men and Women of Earth, what happens to the transportation conglomerates when people don't have to plug in to go anywhere--when the common carrier between here and anywhere--San Francisco, India, the Moon is the brain.

EXT. THE ROOF

The Commandos load up their weapons, strapping on ropes. With rhythmic precision, they rappel down the side of the house. The ranting Mike can be seen pacing through the library window just below.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM

Dorcas calmly hands Mike the hangered tuxedo.

MIKE
Men and women of Earth, what becomes of physicians and dentists when people are truly healthy?

EXT. JUST ABOVE THE LIBRARY WINDOW

The rappelling Commandos slam to a stop above the windows of the library. The Commando Leader counts to three with his fingers. In one mighty motion, the Commandos swing down toward the windows.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM

The empty ropes of the intruders slap harmlessly against the windows of the room. The Commandos have vanished. The viewer pulls from the window to a cackling, blue-eyed Mike.

EXT. THE HOTEL ROOF

A DISTRAUGHT COMMANDO looks down over the edge to his non-existent compatriots, squealing into a walkie-talkie.

DISTRAUGHT COMMANDO
I don't know <u>where</u> they went...

He suddenly disappears, his Walkie-talkie bashing to the ground. The entire military transport next vanishes. As does a massive chopper flying overhead.

INT. THE LIBRARY

Eyes going blue, Mike roams the room, changing into his tux.

MIKE
But where was I? What is going to happen to Earth when Women get the power of the Religion? A female conceives only when she wants to. She is immune to disease. She can desire intercourse with a whole-heartedness that Cleopatra never dreamed of--but any male grokked to be a rapist would vanish so quickly that he wouldn't know what hit him. Women, free of guilt and fear. The pharmaceutical industry will be just a passing casualty--just think what laws, institutions, attitudes and prejudices will have to swing their sorry carcasses to the garbage disposal.

GILLIAN
I've got a headache.

MIKE
It should ache. When everybody can read minds, every untruth will be an annoying buzz that must be extinguished.
(cackling)
I mean, am I out of line, here?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ESTATE--DAY

A Super-Chopper jockeys for attack position over the estate.

INT. CHOPPER

Orders come screeching over the radio to a SCRAMBLING PILOT.

CAPTAIN (RADIO)
Move in. Repeat. Move in!

SCRAMBLING PILOT
But the other transports have disappeared!

CAPTAIN (RADIO)
Goddammit, just fire!

EXT. SUPERCHOPPER IN AIR

The chopper thunders its guns, shredding up the front lawn.

INT. KITCHEN

A PRECOCIOUS AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRL stands up among a comfortably seated group of followers.

PRECOCIOUS YOUNG GIRL
Let me try this one...

She cutely scrunches up her face. Her eyes go blue.

THE SUPER-CHOPPER

becomes a harmless waft of oxygen.

INT. MISSION CONTROL

The CAPTAIN is now screeching live amid the Mission Control pandemonium. Anxiety Disposal look to a massive computerized map the estate, racing to and fro with communiques, shouting in headsets. Dryden watches it all, his arms folded.

CAPTAIN
Goddamnit, all of them? Okay, okay, let's regroup--what about missiles..nukes? Can we...

The Captain vanishes. His head-set thuds downward. His squealing Staffers next vaporize, turning frenzy to silence. Abandoned pape wobble in air. Dryden unfolds his arms and departs.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM--DAY

Mike trembles down to the bed, a little exhausted.

MIKE
But officer, it was self-defense...

JUBAL
Hush. I knew you when you were only an egg, so listen up. I'm not sure exactly what you've been trying to do over the last year, but you've done a good job of it. You created some kind of beautiful and complex mental and physical discipline that's turned a lot of people into something amazing. So you didn't get everybody in the world on this pass, so you pissed off the powers-at-be and the powers-at-wanna-be--How about that old Martian chestnut "Waiting is a goodness." Gillian says we got a 500 year grace period from your Elders back home. You'd be surprised the things that can happen in half-a-century...

MIKE
You speak rightly, Jubal. Here in America, people like to wait faster than anywhere else. It has affected me. I've become un-patient. I must let go. I have revealed the water of life, but only you can teach yourself how to swim. Every planet creates its own pace.

EXT. OUTSIDE JUBAL'S ESTATE

Vans marked MEDIA barrel up onto the grass before Jubal's house. With tactical prowess, crews set up 21st century equipment. Bus and cars, both the air and land variety, rumble up and down to t grounds. Pockets of PROTESTORS of every conceivable orientation rouse outward.

INT. THE LIBRARY--MORNING

Rising up, Mike nips and tucks his tuxedo.

MIKE
I grok in fullness. It's showtime.

EXT. THE ESTATE GROUNDS

The crowd forms before the makeshift stage of lumber that Duke a his crew had built. A Bus of Fosterites file out onto the ground A strange, angry, ugly "party" atmosphere develops. Banners are unfurled. Chants of "Martian go home" and "I don't like Mike" sputter among the mob.

Reporterette Connie hustles before a view of them all.

CONNIE
The crowd is ugly and who can blame them. This Martian mock-messiah has gone over the limit of acceptable subversiveness. Wait...apparently there is new activity inside the house...

INT. STAIRCASE--DAY

Mike's friends form on either side of the grand staircase. The m outside can be heard grousing through the front. Anne parades d in her flowing, red, Fair Witness robe. Both still a little out it, Gillian and Jubal are huddled at the bottom of the stairs.

JUBAL
(looking out)
I never met a man or woman I didn't like, but once they get in a crowd...

GILLIAN
(looking up)
I'd say the whole day is shaping up a little funky...

Popping out a top hat, tuxedo-ed Mike marches down the gauntlet passing his followers, notably Dorcas and Miriam, with caresses hugs. As he approaches the end of the line, Duke latches on a m: microphone to Mike's face and gets a hug. Mike and Anne exchange serious nods. Anne pulls down her Fair Witness goggles.

JUBAL
Tough audience out there. I hope you know what you're doing...

MIKE
I wouldn't be doing it if I didn't know it...

Mike and Juba simultaneously latch out for a firm, warm handsha Gillian shakes her head at his glistening get-up.

GILLIAN
Oh Mike..Jesus Christ.

MIKE
Hey, leave him out of this. This is my gig. I'm no Messiah. I'm not an Anti-Christ, either. I'm just a guy from out of town.

They melt into a hug and a kiss. Gillian pulls away...

GILLIAN
Thou art God.

MIKE
Thanks. But then, who isn't?

Mike tosses her the top hat and glides out through the front doo: into the light.

EXT. THE ESTATE GROUNDS

The crowd rouses up into fierce boos as the figure of Mike hustle to the top of the stage.

Connie swings before her camera.

CONNIE
Mike has left the building. This true-life climax is brought to you by the good people at...

EXT. THE STAGE

Mike looks over the shouting mass of people, with the grin of a candidate at a convention. He speaks into his facial microphone.

MIKE
Hi. I'm Mike. So I guess this means I fucked up. "Thou art God"--that three word phrase that is the backbone of my religion--was meant to be an unafraid assumption of personal responsibility.

EXT. TOKYO MALL--NIGHT

Nightime Tokyo shoppers are mesmerized.

MIKE (SCREEN)
I'm not talking selfishness. Helping yourself and helping the world are not mutually exclusive. Cure one you cure the other.

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM

The Executives and a walking-in Dryden watch Mike.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Some people of your planet understood me and accepted the bitter half along with the sweet.

EXT. THE STREET

The Street is packed with people plugged into Mike's sermon.

MIKE (SCREEN)
But most of you insisted on thinking of God as something outside yourselves.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE

Caxton watches the broadcast alone in his office.

MIKE (SCREEN)
Something that yearns to take every bumbling moron to His breast and comfort him.

INT. FRONT YARD

Mike booms to the increasingly hostile mob.

MIKE
The notion that the effort has to be your own...and that all the trouble you are in is of your own doing...well, you guys didn't go for it.

CROWD MEMBER
Goddamn you!

MIKE
But you yourself are God. You can damn only yourself. If you do not like your life or your future, you have one God to blame and curse. You.

ANOTHER CROWD MEMBER
You goddamn blasphemer!

MIKE
Is this mike on?

The Shouting Crowd Member picks up a rock and throws it at Mike pounds off his arm.

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM

In a shaft of sudden pain, Dryden clutches his arm. Upon the conference room screen, another rock is seen slamming into Mike forehead, causing a bloody scratch. The exact same bloody scrat tears into Dryden's face.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE

Caxton is also a mess of confusion and pain. Mike gets slammed again by a fury of debris, knocking him to the ground. Caxton crashes to the grass patch of his office floor, similarly assau by an invisible fusillade.

EXT. THE STAGE

From the back of the stage, Gillian and Jubal watch with trembli worry as Mike rises back up, adjusting his bent mini-microphone. Anne emotionlessly studies the situation in her Fair Witness gar

MIKE
I've been thinking...I probably shouldn't have called it a Religion. Word Religion makes people a little crazy, not to mention, sanctimonious. Maybe I should have referred to the life-transforming work we do here as a hobby. Or a club. Like Shriners. Word "Religion"-- just asking for problems. Something to think about for next time.

THE FRONT YARD

A very strange set of gold-uniformed FOSTERITES WITH DISGUSTING GRAY SKIN (obviously the subjects of those Race change experiment move through the crowds. They kneel down to sacks and pull up old fashioned shotguns. They pump them.

MIKE

gives them a glance. Smiles. Closes his eyes. A shotgun blast rip into Mike's leg.

MIKE
(almost comical)
Ouch!

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM

Operatic music thankfully drowns out a howling-in-pain Dryden. T other execs launch from their chairs in slow-motion mystification

EXT. THE STAGE

Mike teeters up to get a severe gunshot to the shoulder.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE

Caxton's shoulder detonates. He screams out his lungs, silent against the chords of the soundtrack. Caxton's fellow Media staffers helplessly bang on Caxton's locked office cubicle.

EXT. - THE FRONT YARD

The gone-native mob is really cutting loose now, throwing up everything they can get their hands on, including cherry bombs. Duke and Dawn stoically hold back a frantic Jubal and Gillian. J continues to unemotionally watch on. The battered Mike tries to cling onto some lucidity, smile not wavering.

MIKE
Hi. Hi. Four score and seven years ago bowels move excellently houston we've got a brought to you by Romeo Romeo where art thou--or not to be-- the pistachios I understand Sex--Sex-- What? You wanna cup? Hi. Hi. Hi. Hi.

The Mysteriously Racialed Fosterite Gunmen fire at the same time The shots send Mike spinning off over the stage, down to the ground.

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM

Dryden's lifeless body arcs onto the conference table.

INT. OUTSIDE CAXTON'S OFFICE

Caxton comes shattering out through the windows of his office in a vibrating heap before his co-workers.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN

The viewer's viewpoint floats down to a placid view of Mike, seemingly dead on the grass. His face suddenly wails up a last laugh.

EXT. SPACE

World-wide Satellite 17 convulses into a vivid, but completely silent explosion.

EXT. THE ESTATE

The Media trucks suddenly explode.

INT. THE CONFERENCE ROOM

The Federation screens blow up.

INT. CAXTON'S OFFICE

The screen in the Media Center detonates.

EXT. THE STREET

The line of screens on the street erupt in destruction.

INT. THE FOSTERITE CHURCH

The screen of the Fosterite Chapel flies to pieces, before a ga
Bishop Blue.

INT. AFRICAN BONFIRE--NIGHT

The screen of the tribe volcanos across the camp.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DINER

The screens set up outside the famous diner Hiroshima.

INT. TOKYO MALL--NIGHT

The multi-screen apparatus fulminates across the mall floor.

INT. THE EARLIER-SEEN SUBURBAN HOME

The Suburbia screen fireworks before the reeling all-americans.

EXT. THE CARNIVAL--DAY

Carnival screens convulse in a ball of demolition.

INT. BACKYARD--THAT NIGHT

The viewer is lulled away from a destroyed, still gently smokin
telestereovision to a backyard dinner party. Swing music is soft
wafting to a long tableclothed table illuminated by enchanting
candles. Anne, Dorcas, Miriam, Duke, Ex-Secretary General Dougl
Dr. Nelson, and others, in a near-ballet, take their positions a
the table.

Big bowls are placed before each person. With an element of
telepathy, all engage in cheery dinner conversation. Everyone
except Jubal and Gillian, revealed to be statues of destroyed
bereavement at the end of the table.

JUBAL
I know everyone is so in touch with
their inner happiness... but can't they
knock it off for tonight?

GILLIAN
I never got that far in the study
program. I mean, I do feel something--
a gladness deep inside that Mike went
out the way he wanted to...
(distracted)
Pretty great stew, huh?

JUBAL
Yes...actually it is...

The conversation at the rest of the table does a deft lull into silence. All turn to Gillian and Jubal.

ANNE
Are you two really going to pout all night? Nothing is over. How can Mike ever leave those who have grokked him...

DOUGLAS
My contacts at the Federation tell me, now that "the Alien is dead," the dogs have been called off. Dryden's death doesn't hurt, either. We're safe. Relatively.

DORCAS
Our status is now one of Movement of the People and not Gimmick of a Martian.

DR. NELSON
I think we all thought Mike could write a most amazing book on human nature. Well, he did. It's in Martian.

ANNE
And it's on several hundreds of hours of tapes he's made over the last year, along with a completely bizarre and bizarrely complete Martian/English dictionary.

MIRIAM
Can't you see, Jubal and Jill, What Was has no power against What Is.

DUKE
More than ever, the best of both worlds.

JUBAL
As always, I have questions. First...what's in this soup?

DORCAS
It's incredible, isn't it?

GILLIAN
(figuring it out)
And it's Mike...isn't it?

Gillian and Jubal deadpan-stop chewing. Everyone is glowing.

MIRIAM
Would you prefer people walk around wearing him as a crucifix earring? Or how about embalmed in a big glass case?

Gillian and Jubal swallow.

DUKE
Needs salt, though.

JUBAL
(beat)
Mike always did need a little seasoning...but let's grok that big goofy angel as he is...

Gillian gives an idle glance to a pack of cigarettes at the corne of the table. And then an intense stare. A very intense one. The pack of cigarettes begin to slowly vibrate across the table. Anne reaches out and stops their progress.

ANNE
I wouldn't. You're pregnant.

GILLIAN
I...Oh...When?

ANNE
During the teleportation. He thought it was something you wanted.

Hit by a truck, Gillian starts to speak, but can't. She smiles. S departs the table unnoticed by the revelers around her.

INT. THE HOUSE

The happily chatting dinner party steals in from the night air. They cheerfully meander toward the grand staircase. Anne significantly pauses to put her Fair Witness goggles in a small vault in the wall.

DUKE
Did anyone see where Gillian went off to?

MIRIAM
Front!

JUBAL
What?

MIRIAM
Don't you have something to dictate?

JUBAL
Concept: A human male, raised on Mars, comes down to Earth and immediately figures out what a messed-up, insecure crock we all are. He tries to shake things up with a recipe that combines Martian clarity and Earthly desire. The world's not ready for it, so the well-meaning visitor gets pretty painfully extinguished. But what Earth has forgotten is that if you got the right merchandise, it doesn't matter if the founder has passed on.

MIRIAM
Name of author?

JUBAL
Jubal Harshaw. Opening line: "Our story begins with Giant Rocks screaming Hello."

The viewer's viewpoint remains stationary as our convoy of characters rise up the staircase out of frame.

EXT. MARS

A slam-cut to the outside of the planet Mars.

JUBAL (V.O.)
I end my tale at the beginning. But you should know I was later to find out from the Neo-Nasa Martian Data pipeline that Mike's Elders were as mildly annoyed as a Martian could be about the treatment their human ambassador was given.

EXT. STADIUM--NIGHT

A mad effect-shot of a teleported space station flickers into vie atop a football field in a stadium of spectators.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Also, the Elders were the Martian equivalent of bored with the Earth's colony construction, so with the Martian equivalent of a yawn, they teleported most of the colony back to Earth during half-time of the Super Bowl.

A dazed congregation of astronauts stagger from the transported building, spewing the ole pink liquid.

EXT. SURFACE OF MARS

A vision of a vast trembling group of Martian Elders.

JUBAL (V.O.)
I think they made a note to move up the Earth's destruction from 500 years to 499 years from now. Maybe we'll change in the next 4-9-9. Maybe we won't.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD--NIGHT

Jubal takes a meditative stroll upon the battered "stage" in his front yard, avoiding the bloodstains in the lumber. He looks out the debris left behind by the angry mob.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Mike had grokked that the only way to save his religion was to destroy the damn thing. I have no idea what happens next. I just know it is time to stop thinking of Armageddon and start thinking of tomorrow morning.

Jubal's POV teeters upward to see Gillian standing atop the roof the house.

EXT. THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE--NIGHT

The viewer gets a more intimate view of a very blissful Gillian. Looming before her is an absolutely astonishing expanse of stars. She raises her arms.

JUBAL (V.O.)
I behold my partner in cynicism. Is she praying to Mars, praying to Mike, praying to her unborn superchild, praying to heaven, or just praying to herself....

EXT. (VERY) EARTH

The viewer's viewpoint pulls out on a wide view of Earth.

JUBAL (V.O.)
Whatever it is she's doing....It seems intrigueresting. Guess there's still a lot to learn down here and up there--for even someone as young as me. I will grok and I will grok until the day grokking comes to fullness. Or something like that.

The planet Earth suddenly becomes a pupil in someone's eye.

The eyelid winks. Floating further back, the eye belongs to a beaming Valentine Michael Smith swirling in beatific light.